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## NOTES ON THE B-TEXT MSS. OF *PIERS PLOWMAN*

### INTRODUCTION

The existence of more than one form of *Piers Plowman* has been recognised for a long time. In the 16th century Crowley,<sup>1</sup> who printed a B-text, discussed some differences that he observed between his B-text MS. and a C-text MS. with which he was acquainted; possibly, he knew also of an A-text MS., but this is by no means certain. Ritson,<sup>2</sup> in the early 19th century, distinguished the B- and C-texts, without attempting to place one chronologically before the other. Whitaker,<sup>3</sup> working about the same time, decided that the C-text was written before the B-text, and that both texts were the work of one man. To Price<sup>4</sup> must be given the honour of the discovery of the A-text; he thought that the A-text represented the earliest draft of the poem, the B-text the second, the C-text the third and last. That one man was the author of the three versions is implicit in his discussion of them, though he does not categorically say so. Thomas Wright,<sup>5</sup> the first modern editor of the B-text, thought it was written earlier than the C-text; curiously enough, though he gives occasional collations from an A-MS., he does not mention the A-text. He doubted whether the author of the B-text was identical with the author of the C-text. A few years later, Marsh<sup>6</sup> discussed important variations in different classes of *Piers Plowman* MSS. It was his opinion that the original poem might have been revised by the author, or, more probably, that it had been "edited" by various persons into whose hands it had come. He did not differentiate the A-, B- and

<sup>1</sup> "The Vision of Pierce Plowman; now fyrste imprinted by Roberte Crowley, dwellyng in Ely rentes in Holburne. Anno Domini 1505." Second and third editions appeared in the same year. (1505 is an obvious error for 1550.) See Crowley's Introduction, note to VI. 328 and, in the second and third editions, to Prologue 215-221.

<sup>2</sup> "Bibliographia Poetica." London, 1802, pp. 29, 30.

<sup>3</sup> "Visio Willi de Petro Plouhman, item Visiones ejusdem de Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest." T. D. Whitaker. London, 1813., p. xxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> "The History of English Poetry, by Thomas Warton, from the edition of 1824, superintended by the late Richard Price, Esq." 1840 Vol. II, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> "The Vision and the Creed of Piers Plowman." Thomas Wright, London, 1842. Vol. I, pp. xli, xlii.

<sup>6</sup> "The Origin and History of the English Language." George P. Marsh. London, 1862, p. 297.

C-texts. From Professor Skeat's great work<sup>7</sup> on *Piers Plowman* the following points are of interest here: he christened the three versions the A-, B- and C-texts; he published the first A-version and was the first (and so far the only) editor of all three versions; he thought the A-text was written before the B-text, the B-text before the C-text, and that they were the work of one man. After the appearance of Prof. Skeat's editions the view was widely held that no further elucidation of the text, or of the personality of the author was to be expected, unless some hitherto unknown MSS. should be discovered. Most of the editions and adaptations of *Piers Plowman* which have appeared since the completion of Professor Skeat's work are founded on his texts.

To Professor Manly<sup>8</sup> is due "the credit of having initiated a new stage in the progress of Langland criticism."<sup>9</sup> He maintains that *Piers Plowman* was written not by one man, but by five, viz:-

The first author wrote A-text, Prol. —Pass. VIII; possibly breaking off his work at VIII. 131.

The second author wrote A-text, Pass. IX-XII. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Edition prepared for the Early English Text Society comprising:—

(a) "Parallel Extracts from 29 MSS. of *Piers the Plowman*." E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 17. 1865.

(b) "The Vision of William concerning *Piers Plowman*." The Vernon Text. E.E.T.S., O.S., No. 28. 1867. (A-text [Vernon], Prof. Skeat's A-text).

(c) "The Vision of William concerning *Piers the Plowman*." The Crowley Text. E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 38. 1869. (B-text [Laud], Prof. Skeat's B-text, the accepted B-text).

(d) "The Visions of William concerning *Piers the Plowman*; Richard the Redeless and The Crowned King." The Whitaker Text. E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 54. 1873. (C-text [Phillips], Prof. Skeat's C-text, the accepted C-text.)

(e) "Notes on *Piers Plowman*." E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 67. 1877.

(f) "*Piers Plowman*: Notes, Glossary etc. completing the work." E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 81, 1884.

(g) "Parallel Extracts from 45 MSS. of *Piers Plowman*," (Second edition of (a) with alterations and additions) 1885.

<sup>8</sup> (a) "The Lost Leaf of '*Piers the Plowman*.'" John Matthews Manly. *Modern Philology*. January, 1906.

(b) "*Piers the Plowman* and its Sequence." John Matthews Manly. *Cambridge History of English Literature*. Vol. II.

<sup>9</sup> "The Misplaced Leaf of '*Piers the Plowman*.'" Dr. H. Bradley's letter in the *Athenæum*, April 21, 1906.

The third author (Johan But) wrote A-text, Pass. XII. 57-117.

The fourth author wrote the B-text.

The fifth author wrote the C-text.<sup>10</sup>

The third author, Johan But, may be ignored here; his additional lines (there is some discussion about the number of them) raise many interesting problems, but these belong rather to the A-text.

Professor Manly argued that the differences in ideals and technique found in the three versions were incompatible with their being the work of one man and pointed out certain places where he considered that the authors of the B- and C-texts had misunderstood the text from which they were writing, to a degree which would have been possible only if they were dealing with the work of another. M. Jusserand, the chief opponent of this theory, using the same passages as Professor Manly, found they were in favour of single authorship.<sup>11</sup>

A new turn was given to the discussion by Dr. R. W. Chambers and Mr. J. H. G. Grattan.<sup>12</sup> They pointed out that the MS. of the accepted A-text (the Vernon MS.) is, in the earlier Passus at least, in many respects inferior to the Trinity MS., and that an examination of the A-text MSS. would lead to the reconstruction of an A-version much nearer the B-version than is usually sup-

<sup>10</sup> Theophilus D. Hall, about the same time, arrived independently at the conclusion that the author of the B-text was not the author of the C-text. See his article "Was 'Langland' the Author of the C-text of 'The Vision of Piers Plowman?' " *Modern Language Review*. Vol. IV, No. 1.

<sup>11</sup> "Piers Plowman—The Work of One or Five?" J. J. Jusserand. *Modern Philology*, Vol. VI, pp. 271 ff.

"The Authorship of Piers Plowman with a Terminal Note on the Lost Leaf." John Matthews Manly. *Ibid.* Vol. VII, pp. 83 ff.

"Piers Plowman—The Work of One or Five. A Reply." J. J. Jusserand. *Ibid.* Vol. VII, pp. 289 ff.

"The Authorship of 'Piers Plowman.'" R. W. Chambers. *Modern Language Review*, Vol. V, pp. 1 ff.

"The Authorship of 'Piers the Plowman.'" Henry Bradley. *Ibid.* Vol. V, pp. 202 ff.

"Studies in 'Piers the Plowman.'" Samuel Moore. *Modern Philology*, Vol. XI, pp. 177 ff.; Vol. XII, pp. 19 ff.

"An Essay towards the Critical Text of the A-version of 'Piers the Plowman.'" Thomas A. Knott. *Ibid.* Vol. XII, pp. 389 ff.

<sup>12</sup> "The Text of 'Piers Plowman.'" R. W. Chambers, J. H. G. Grattan. *Modern Language Review*. Vol. IV, pp. 357 ff.

posed.<sup>13</sup> At the same time they showed that detailed examination of the A-, B- and C-texts would be useful in the *Piers Plowman* controversy. The A-text has already been carefully examined by Messrs. Chambers and Grattan, but for the purpose of comparison it is now necessary to fix the text not only of the A- but also of the B-version, and to investigate the authority of the hitherto recognised B-text.

This paper deals with the last of these points.

Professor Skeat's B-text,<sup>14</sup> based on MS. Laud Misc. 581 (*L*) is the accepted B-text. Professor Skeat claimed that *L* most probably represented the autograph of the poet. He was led to this decision by the excellent text of *L* and by certain marks which occur:

- (a) where the MS. needs correction,
- (b) against certain passages which are altered in the C-text.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Skeat ranked *L* extremely high and wrote of it:

There are probably more doubtful points in a single Canterbury Tale or in a single Act in some of Shakespeare's plays than in the whole of the B-text of *Piers the Plowman*. . . . I wish especially to draw the reader's attention to this, that he may remember, once for all, that any 'conjectural emendations' are, in general, entirely out of the question.<sup>16</sup>

This authoritative statement was almost universally accepted; Dr. Kron,<sup>17</sup> discussing the relationship of the MSS. of the three versions in great detail, gives an unqualified assent to it. He maintains that *L* is free from the various faults which disfigure the other B-text MSS. and that its excellent readings require no correction from the C-text.

A little investigation of Kron's work discloses that he had not made any real study of the B-text MSS., contenting himself

<sup>13</sup> Messrs. Chambers and Grattan kindly provided me with proof sheets (Pro:-Pass:IV) of the provisional draft of the revised A-text which they are editing on the basis of MS. R.3.14. in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, collated with all the A-text MSS. In this paper A-text quotations Pro:-Pass: IV are from the A-text of Messrs. Chambers and Grattan; A-text quotations Pass. V-XII are from Professor Skeat's A-text, E.E.T.S. edition.

<sup>14</sup> All references to *Piers Plowman* (unless otherwise stated) are to the B-text of Professor Skeat. E.E.T.S. Edition.

<sup>15</sup> B-text, pp. viii-x.

<sup>16</sup> B-text, p. xxxix.

<sup>17</sup> "William Langley's Buch von Peter dem Pflüger." Dr. R. Kron. Erlangen, 1885, p. 52.

with the readings given in the footnotes of the accepted B-text, and that much of this part of his book is translated from Professor Skeat. Teichmann,<sup>18</sup> on the other hand, believes *L* to be the best of the 45 extant MSS. of *Piers Plowman*, but sees no reason for believing that it was written by the poet's own hand.

In view of the numerous and serious faults that it contains, scholars now no longer hold that *L* represents the autograph of the poet; Professor Skeat himself had given up this theory by 1910.<sup>19</sup> His editions are the only texts of *Piers Plowman* used at all largely by students, and since this theory has not been corrected in the latest reprints, it follows that *L* is still frequently considered to be the autograph of the poet.

The accepted B-text is not an exact reproduction of *L*. Prof. Skeat emended his MS. occasionally, but in pursuance of his plan of printing a MS. with as few alterations as possible, he allowed several errors to remain in the text while mentioning them in the Critical Notes. Teichmann would emend the text in these instances, and criticizes Professor Skeat for permitting an erroneous reading to stand in the text while altering it in the notes.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Chambers<sup>21</sup> goes further and points out two or three striking errors in the accepted B-text; he argues that even where all the B-MSS. support a certain reading, if the evidence of the A- and C-texts<sup>22</sup> is alike and against that reading, then the B-text reading is, in all probability, a corruption:

<sup>18</sup> "Zur Stabreimzeile in William Langland's Buch von Peter dem Pflüger." E. Teichmann. *Anglia*, XIII, pp. 140 ff. See also the article by the same writer: "Die Verbalflexion in William Langley's 'Buch von Peter dem Pflüger.'" Programm der Realschule zu Aachen, 1887.

<sup>19</sup> "Piers Plowman—The Work of One or Five. A Reply." J. J. Jusserand. *Modern Philology*, VII, p. 312. I am unable to trace Professor Skeat's change of opinion in his published works.

<sup>20</sup> "Zum Texte von William Langland's Vision." E. Teichmann. *Anglia*, XV, pp. 224, 228.

<sup>21</sup> "The Authorship of 'Piers the Plowman.'" R. W. Chambers. *Modern Language Review*, V, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>22</sup> It is just possible that the accepted C-text has some contamination from an A-text. This is, however, unlikely as it contains no characteristic A-text lines or passages. An examination of certain selected passages in all the extant C-MSS. has not revealed any important errors in the accepted C-text, though in the later Passus at least innovations which must be due to the scribe are not infrequent. It has been assumed that Professor Skeat's C-text (based on the Phillips MS.) approximates to the original C-text with suffi-

For no B-MS., not even the famous and excellent Laud 581, can be regarded as representing the original B-text with anything like complete accuracy.

. . . Numerous and good as the B-MSS. are, their close agreement may be due to their being accurate transcripts of one, not always quite accurate, archetype. To arrive at the original B we must supplement the evidence of the extant MSS. by the evidence derived from C. For C, whether or not he was identical with B, must have had before him an exceedingly early MS. of B.

One instance will serve to show how necessary caution is in arguing as to B's corruption of A . . . In A Pro. 41, some A-MSS. speak of beggars with bags *bretful* or *bredful* *ycrammed*, another of beggars whose bags *with bred full be cromed*. The old rule, that the harder reading is to be preferred, would lead us to suppose *bretful* (*bredful*) right; for this would easily be corrupted into *of bred full*, whilst the reverse process is hardly credible. A, then, almost certainly wrote *bretful* (*bredful*). The B-MSS. are unanimously in favour of *of bred full*.<sup>23</sup> It might be argued that the 'B reviser' had before him a MS. of A with this reading, and took it over into his revised text. But when we come to the C-text we find the original reading *bretful* reappearing there. The advocates of separate authorship will have to admit that there *was* a B-MS. (viz. that used by C as a basis) which had the reading *bretful*; for the same line of argument which led us in the first place to decide that *bretful* in A could not be corrupted from *of bred full* again applies here. *Of bred full* is not, then, a genuine B-reading at all, but a very early B corruption, inherited by all extant B-MSS. but not belonging to the original B.

Although *L* is now no longer considered by scholars to be the autograph of the poet, on Professor Skeat's authority it was assumed to be the best extant MS. of the B-text, and at first this investigation was based upon it; Wright's edition (*W*) and Crowley's texts (*Cr*) were also employed.<sup>24</sup> It soon became clear that there are in *L* (and consequently in the accepted B-text) numerous

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cient closeness for the argument which follows, and that the value of the C-text MSS., as Professor Skeat says, is:

*E* is almost a duplicate of *P*, the basis of the C-text, and of equal authority.

*Z* is very good after Pass. X.

*K* is very fair.

*M F S G* are fair.

*I T* are of little value.

<sup>23</sup> Dr. Chambers excludes Ashburnham MS. cxxx and Phillips MS. 8252, which were not accessible to him. I have not seen either of these MSS. Some notes on Phillips 8252 are written into a copy of Crowley's third edition now in the Bodleian; according to these notes Phillips 8252 reads *braiful* here.

The scribe of MS. Gg. 4. 31. in the University Library, Cambridge, (*G*) writes two letters of a word beginning with *br* immediately after *bagges*, then over *br* he wrote *off*; so this MS. now agrees with the B-MSS. The scribe may have corrected a simple error here, or he may have had some form of *braiful* in his copy and, not understanding it, have made the obvious alteration.

<sup>24</sup> For the symbols used for the B-MSS. see footnote 32, p. 498.

cases where the reading is inferior to that of the A-text, and where the C-text agrees with the A-text. In some of these cases *W* differs from *L* and agrees with the A- and C-texts, in some *W* agrees with *L*, and there are other cases where *W* has independent readings which are certainly erroneous. The same phenomena are to be observed in *Cr*, except that the text of *Cr* is generally inferior to that of *L* and *W*.

Dr. Chambers' article quoted above shows that when the A- and C-texts agree in a reading differing from that of the accepted B-text, there is a strong probability that the reading of the accepted B-text is a corruption of the true B-text; the discovery that in some of these cases the reading of the B-text MSS. is not unanimous, but that some of them agree with the reading of the A- and C-texts, confirms Dr. Chambers' theory of the corruption of the accepted B-text and encourages the hope of reconstructing an improved B-text differing considerably from the accepted B-text.

In the hope of obtaining some information about the original B-text all the accessible B-MSS.<sup>25</sup> have been collated, and an attempt has been made to come to some conclusion on the following points:

- (1) The relationship of the existing B-MSS.<sup>26</sup>
- (2) An estimate of the value of the existing B-MSS. Which B-MS is nearest to the original B-text, and whether we are justified in considering *L* to be the best B-MS, and *L W* and *R* to be 'alone of the first authority.'<sup>27</sup>
- (3) The lines on which reconstruction of the B-text will have to be based.

The length of the B-text (about 7,000 lines) makes detailed consideration of the whole difficult. So certain passages have been chosen of sufficient length to afford a substantial basis for this preliminary survey. It is hoped that this will give results which (although provisional) will be helpful toward a final and complete survey.

<sup>25</sup> Two of the extant B-MSS. *As* and *Ph*, have not been available to me.

<sup>26</sup> It is now generally recognised that the relationship of MSS. to each other is much more complicated than was formerly supposed; consequently any 'family tree' of MSS. is useful mainly as a guide to thought and must not be regarded as a dogmatic assertion of facts.

<sup>27</sup> B-text, p. ii.



The following are the portions of the B-text chosen for detailed examination:

(i) Prol. —Pass. II.<sup>28</sup> The author of the B-text working over Manly's A1.

(ii) Pass. VIII and IX. The author of the B-text working over Manly's A2.

(iii) Pass. XII. The author of the B-text at the beginning of his original work.

(iv) Pass. XVIII. The author of the B-text in the middle of his original work.

In addition to these selected Passus, I have also examined various isolated lines and passages which seemed of special interest, such as:

(i) Parallel passages of the A-, B- and C-texts which differ in detail. One instance is given here:

A. IV. 4.

'Nay be god' quap consience . 'cunge me rapere:  
But resoun rede me þerto . erst wole I deiȝe.'  
'And I comaunde þe' quap þe king . to consience þanne  
'Rape þe to riden . and resoun þat þou fecche:  
Comaunde hym þat he come . my counseil to here.  
For he shal rewele my reaume . and rede me þe beste  
Of mede and of mo oþere . what man shal hire wedde  
And counte wiþ consience . —so me crist helpe—  
How þou lрист þe peple . þe lerid and þe lewid!'

B. IV. 4.

'Nay, bi criste,' quod consience . 'congeye me for euere!  
But resoun rede me þer-to . rather wil I deye!  
'And I comaunde þe,' quod þe Kynge . to consience þanne,  
'Rape þe to ride . and resoun þow fecche;  
Comaunde hym þat he come . my conseille to here.  
For he shal reule my rewme . and rede me þe beste,  
And acounte with þe, consience . so me cryst helpe  
How þow lernest þe peple . þe lered and þe lewede.'

<sup>28</sup> All references to *Piers Plowman* (unless otherwise stated) are to the B-text of Professor Skeat. E.E.T.S. edition.

## C. V. 4.

'Nay, by crist,' quap Conscience . 'conge me raper!  
 Bote reson rede me þer-to . raper wol ich deye.'  
 'And ich comaunde,' quap þe kyng . to Conscience þenne,  
 'Rape þe to ryde . and reson þat þow fecche;  
 Comaunde hym þat he come . my consail to hure,  
 For he shal rulye my reame . and rede me þe beste,  
 Of mede and of oþer mo . and what man shal hure wedde,  
 And a-counte with þe, consience . so me crist helpe,  
 How þow ledest my puple . lered and lewede.'

Here the A- and C-texts have one line more than the accepted B-text, and read *rapere* for *for euere* in the first line. Some B-MSS. agree with the A- and C-texts in these readings.<sup>29</sup>

(ii) Passages where the B-text is obscure, or where the B-MSS. have variant readings, cf.

- 1) . . . in mesure god . alle manere thynges,  
 And sette (hem) at a certeyne . and at a syker noumbre, . . .  
 Kynges & knyghtes . þat kepen and defenden,  
 Han officers vnder hem . and vch of hem certeyne;  
 And if þei wage men to werre . þei write hem in noumbre,  
 (Or) wil no tresorere hem paye . trauaille þei neure so sore.<sup>30</sup>  
 Alle other in bataille . ben yholde bribours,  
 Pilours and pykehermois . in eche a place ycursed. (XX.  
 253, 254, 256-261)

This passage was probably corrupt in the archetypal B-MS. from which all the extant B-MSS. derive; the chief difficulty is in the line

(Or) wil no tresorere hem paye . trauaille þei neure so sore  
 (XX. 259)

where the variant readings of the B-MSS. are due to the individual efforts of the scribes.

- 2) Edmonde and Edward . eyther were kynges,  
 And seyntes ysette . tyl charite hem folwed.<sup>31</sup> (XV. 217, 218)

Edmund and Edward were kings and saints *tyl charite hem folwed* is meaningless. *W* has a good reading *for charite hem folwede*,

<sup>29</sup> C B Y O C2 G1 read *rather*. Y O C2 have the additional line. (See footnote 47, p. 508)

<sup>30</sup> (Or) *wil*] so in Cr; Ellis wil F; And þer fore wolen men B; Or þei wil written in over an erasure M; all the other B-MSS. begin the line Wil. *tresorere*] tresour M; tresore C B; man tresore W. *hem paye*] taken hym wages R; take hem wages F; wages hem paie C2. *so sore*] C omits; so long G2. B and W place l. 259 after l. 261. C2 has an additional line after l. 259-

But he kunne rekene ariȝt . her names in his rollis.

<sup>31</sup> *tyl*] so R F; for W M (the latter over an erasure).

but it was probably inserted by the writer of *W* and is therefore of no value. Two other MSS., *R F*, have good readings,<sup>31</sup> but it is doubtful how far these MSS. are to be trusted.

- 3) . . . in riche robes . rathest he (i.e. charity) walketh,  
 Ycalled and ycrimiled . and his crowne shaue,  
 (And clenlich ycloþed . in cipres & in tartaryne.)  
 (XV. 222-224)

The bracketed line occurs in seven B-MSS. only, viz:— *C B J Y O C2 G2*.

Isolated lines and short passages such as these are of less value than long consecutive passages in determining the quality of a MS. or its relationship to other MSS., particularly when, as in this case, they are selected for some special difficulty or obscurity. They can often, however, give useful support to conclusions drawn from the examination of longer passages.

In all about two thousand lines have been collated for the purposes of this article (1714 in the selected Passus, about 400 in isolated passages). The B-text of *Piers Plowman* contains some seven thousand lines, so that rather less than one-third of it has been examined in detail.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE EXTANT B-TEXT MSS

There are seventeen MSS. and an early printed edition of the B-text in existence.<sup>32</sup> But they are not of equal worth. *BM* and *Cot* are so closely related to *B* that for the purposes of this paper they are unimportant. *J* is a fragment of little value.

- <sup>31</sup> 1. *L* MS. Laud Misc. 581. Bodleian Library.
2. *M* MS. Add. 35,287. British Museum. Formerly Ashburnham cxxix.
3. *R* MS. Rawl. Poet. 38. Bodleian Library. MS. Lans. 398, British Museum. Missing Pro. 1-124, Pass. I.138-II.39, XVIII. 411-XX. 27.
4. *F* MS. 201. Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Formerly in the possession of W. Fulman M. A.
5. *C* MS. Dd. 1.17. University Library, Cambridge. Missing Pass. XVI. 56-91.
6. *B* MS. Bodley 814. Oxford. Missing Pass. XVI. 56-91.
7. *BM* MS. Add. 10,574. British Museum. Missing Pass. XVI. 56-91, XX.352-384.
8. *Cot* MS. Cott. Calig. A.XI. British Museum. Missing Pass. XVI.56-91.

Access could not be obtained to *Ph*, but some extracts from it are written into a copy of *Cr3* in the Bodleian: the text given there is very corrupt, yet there are several good readings; it is impossible, at present, to estimate the accuracy of these extracts, consequently no use can be made of them. *As* is in America, and no information about it could be obtained. *Cr4* is a 16th century reprint of *Cr3*, and *Cr5* is a copy of *Cr4*; these two are accordingly useless. The remaining eleven MSS. and Crowley's versions require separate investigation.

The problem of the B-text MSS. is very simply stated: they are generally good and are all nearly related to each other. Professor Skeat noted the difference between them and the MSS. of the A-text, which often differ widely:

A glance at the footnotes (i.e., of the B-text) will show that, though more MSS. have been collated than were collated for the A-text, the footnotes occupy less space.<sup>33</sup>

This remarkable likeness in the B-MSS., taken in connection with his theory that *L* was the autograph of the poet, led Professor

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- 9. *J* MS. James 2. Bodleian Library. See footnote 46, p. 506.
  - 10. *Y* MS. Newnham College, Cambridge. Formerly in the possession of H. Yates Thompson.
  - 11. *O* MS. 79. Oriel College, Oxford. Missing Pass. XVII. 96-340, XIX. 276-355.
  - 12. *C2* MS. Ll. 4.14. University Library, Cambridge.
  - 13. *G* MS. Gg. 4.31. University Library, Cambridge.  
*G1* stands for *G*, Pro.-Pass. VII.  
*G2* stands for *G*, Pass. VIII-XX.
  - 14. *W* MS. B.15.17. Trinity College, Cambridge. This is the MS. edited by Thomas Wright. "The Vision and the Creed of *Piers Plowman*." 1842. Second edition, 1856.
  - 15. *Cr* Robert Crowley in 1550 issued three editions of *Piers Plowman* (*Cr1*, *Cr2*, *Cr3*), printed from a MS. which has since been lost. *Cr* stands for the three editions unless otherwise stated.  
*Cr4* Owen Rogers in 1561 reprinted *Cr3* with the addition of the 'Creed of Pierce Plowman.'
  - 16. *Cr5* MS. 201 Caius College, Cambridge. A transcript of *Cr4*.
  - 17. *As*. MS. Ashburnham cxxx.
  - 18. *Ph*. MS. Phillips 8252.

See B-text pp. vi-xxxix, C-text, p. xix (footnote) for Professor Skeat's description of these MSS.

<sup>33</sup> B-text, p. xxxix.

Skeat to maintain that the text of the B-version of *Piers Plowman* was most satisfactory, and that he did not think it was possible to emend it. But certain corruptions of the text, which are found in all the extant B-MSS.,<sup>34</sup> show that unanimous readings of these MSS. are not necessarily correct readings; and the fact that these corruptions occur in all the extant B-MSS. proves that the latter are descended from a common ancestor, the archetypal  $\beta$ , which was itself faulty in these places.

The differences between the B-text MSS. are often so slight that it is not always easy to group them, but there are certain characteristics which divide them into three groups.

(i) Group  $\lambda$ , containing *L M R F*; within  $\lambda$ , *L M* form one sub-group, *R F* another.

(ii) Group  $\tau$ , containing *W Cr*.

(iii) Group  $\omega$ , containing *C B Y O C2 G2*; within  $\omega$ , *C B* form one sub-group, *O C2* another: *Y* and *G2* are independent.

*G1* does not belong to any of these groups.

The value of groups of MSS. in fixing a reading is generally much greater than the value of a single member of the group, and the existence of three groups of good MSS. would seem to promise a simple means of constructing an authentic text; but it will be seen that in two of the groups,  $\lambda$  and  $\tau$ , we have only one reliable MS.

1. Group  $\lambda$ . *L* (MS. Laud Misc. 581) has been generally accepted as the best B-MS.; it is of an early date, well written and preserved, and contains a very good text. It seems to have been carefully copied and the scribe has not felt obliged to smooth every rough place. Professor Skeat based his B-text on *L*; he reproduced the MS. as exactly as possible, but inserted certain lines characteristic of some B-MSS., which *L* omits.<sup>35</sup> Eventually he thought these should have been excluded.<sup>36</sup>

*L*, if not the best, is one of the best copies of the B-version, and a MS. related to *L*, from which one could detect its individual errors, would be of the greatest service. *M* (MS. Add. 35,287) might have been such a one, for it is closely connected with *L* (the resemblance extends even to spelling faults) but, unhappily,

<sup>34</sup> See pp. 518-519.

<sup>35</sup> See B-text V. 273, 338, 569. VI. 49. XV. 224.

<sup>36</sup> B-text, p. xii, footnote.

it has been so much corrected and erased by the enthusiasts through whose hands it has passed, that it is now of very little use. Some of the corrections are from the C-text, some are characteristic of *W*, others cannot be traced. Here is an example:

Dame Study complains that there are none to have pity on *the careful* man who *may crye and carpen atte gate*, rather do the rich drive him away, for they:

. . . hoen on hym as an hounde . and hoten hym go pennes.  
(X. 61)

Several scribes were troubled by *hoen* and we find *howlen on* or *hunten* as variants.<sup>37</sup> *M* has *hunten* written in over an erasure.

Where the original reading can be recovered it generally agrees with *L*, but the correctors were conscientious in their work, and *M* has to be largely disregarded. Neither *L* nor *M* is derived from the other, they are descended from a common ancestor "L." Practically, *L* can receive neither criticism nor support from *M*; this is most unfortunate, for, if there were some reliable MS. from which *L* could be corrected, it would furnish a very good idea of the archetypal "L."

Two closely related MSS. *R* (MS. Rawl Poet. 38) and *F* (MS. 201 C. C. C. Oxf.) must be grouped with *L* and *M*. *R* has a somewhat romantic history. When Professor Skeat examined it at Oxford he found that sixteen leaves had been cut out; some time later four of these leaves were discovered in a volume of MSS. in the British Museum; the remaining twelve leaves have not yet been found. Professor Skeat considered *R* to be one of the three best B-MSS., and he made considerable use of it in preparing his B-text. Not only did he correct *L* from it, but he inserted into *L* numerous lines from *R*, which occur also in *R*'s cognate, *F*, but in no other B-MS.<sup>38</sup> *R* seems to be a good MS. for, though it often differs from the other B-MSS. and has original faults, it has on several occasions escaped errors which are found in all the other B-MSS. In these circumstances one could hope to eliminate *R*'s original errors by comparison, and to have a valuable check on *L*. Further investigation did not bear out this expectation. Many of *R*'s variations from the other B-MSS. take the form of

<sup>37</sup> *howen on* O C2; *howlen on* B; *hunten* W.

<sup>38</sup> See XII. 57-59, 118-127, 152, 153; XVIII. 310b-311a etc. Only one of these lines (XII. 59) is essential. See pp. 521-523.

additions and omissions of a remarkable kind, some of them corresponding to the A-text, some of them characteristic of the C-text.

All the variations of *R*, as well as a host of individual errors, are found in *F*, a MS. written about the middle of the fifteenth century and the worst of the B-MSS. It is corrupt and incomplete, and has many spurious lines. The writer of *F* was often puzzled by his copy, but he took care that no one else should suffer in the same way. For example:

In the accepted B-text Witte speaks of the Creator:

For he was synguler hymself . and seyde *faciamus* . . . (IX. 35)

Pere he seyde, *dixit, & facta sunt* . . . (IX. 41a)

And in þis manere was man made . þorugh myjte of god  
almiȝti. (IX. 43)

*F* did not understand why God, 'synguler hymself' should use the plural *faciamus*, so he emended the lines to:

And for he was nowht syngler . he seyde *faciamus* . . .

Ther god seyde þis sawe . *faciamus* . . .

And in þis manere man was maad . þoruȝ þre persones oone.

*F* often alters the text to make four alliterative syllables in a line as:

Fals or fauel . or feerys of hise felachepe. (II. 193)

*F* does preserve an occasional good reading and, generally speaking, it has the passages missing from *R*,<sup>39</sup> but its text is, for the most part, so bad that it is useless.

*R* and *F* are derived from a common ancestor "R." Certain errors of *R*, which do not appear in *F*, show that *F* is not descended from *R*; *R* was written before *F* and therefore cannot be descended from it. "R" joins with "L" to form the group λ.

Professor Skeat notices the remarkable variations and additions in *R* (he did not know of *F*'s connection with *R*) and concluded that *R* represented a first draft of the C-text; i.e., that *R* is a B-MS. which has undergone revision at the hands of the author and is, accordingly, a valuable check on the B-text. The MS. itself gives no help in the matter; it is neatly written throughout, in the same hand, with very few corrections, and in *F*, also, there is nothing to indicate the source of these variations. So the additions, whatever their origin may be, were written into

<sup>39</sup> Pro. 1-124, Pass. I. 138-II. 39, XVIII. 411-XX. 27.

an ancestor of *R F*. They might, on *prima facie* evidence, have been insertions from A- or C-MSS., or they may have been author's revisions; the nature of many of the alterations suggests that the former is the truer theory, and the possibility of A- and C-text contamination in *R* detracts greatly from the value of its readings.

Some of the variations bear the marks of being simply copied from some other MS., as they interfere with the narrative or give an inferior reading. Here is an example:

The Lady Holy Church tells the dreamer of the fall of Lucifer. In the A-text she says:

Lucifer . . .  
 . . . was þe louelokest of sijt . aftir oure lord  
 Til he brak buxumnesse . þoruȝ bost of hym seluen.  
 Þanne fil he wiþ his felawis . and fendis bicomē (A. I. 109-112)

The B-text omits the description of Lucifer's beauty and the reason of his disobedience, and thus differs from the A-text; it runs:

Lucifer . . .  
 But for he brake buxumnesse . his blisse gan he tyne,  
 And fel fro þat felawship . in a fendes liknes. (B. I.  
 112, 113)<sup>40</sup>

"R," by substituting only *Til* of the A-text for *But for* of the B-text, breaks up and weakens the sense of the passage.

It is now clear that of the four MSS. in group λ, *M* has been rendered almost useless by corrections; *R* and *F* are suspected of A- and C-text contamination and, in addition, *F* is hopelessly corrupt; this leaves *L* as the only reliable MS., with practically no possibility of correcting its individual errors from the other members of the group.

2. Group τ. *W* (MS. 15. 17. Trin. Coll. Camb.), the best MS. of the group τ, is in exactly the same position as *L*, i.e., it is the only reliable MS. in its group. This, the famous Trinity MS., printed by Thomas Wright, is slightly inferior to *L*, though it has been thought to be a serious rival. *W* appears sometimes to have the better text, for in several places where *L* is obscure *W* is simple and clear; but the very clearness of *W* is suspicious.

It is now clear that we have no absolutely reliable B-MS. and that there are certain errors in all the extant B-MSS. which

<sup>40</sup> The prose gloss to these lines in the accepted B-text is erroneous.



must be derived from their common ancestor, the archetypal MS.  $\beta$ . The writer of *W* had before him a good copy of the faulty  $\beta$ . Many of the errors he could not detect; others were obvious, and not having the 'editor's sense of responsibility,' and wishing to turn out a satisfactory article, he altered them as well as he could. So in certain difficult passages of the accepted B-text a comparison of all B-MSS. leaves little doubt that *W*, the only MS. which is not obscure, owes its reading to the scribe.<sup>41</sup>

The only close cognate to *W* is Crowley's printed version.

In 1550 Robert Crowley<sup>42</sup> printed the first edition of his *Piers Plowman* from a MS. of the B-text (*Cr1*), later in the same year he issued two further editions (*Cr2*, *Cr3*). The second edition is more correct than the first, the third is inferior to them both. A false reading of the first edition is often rectified in the second and third editions; a few new errors appear in the second edition, many more in the third.

'Lyer,' in his flight from Westminster, was

. . . to-lugged of manye.

He was nawhere welcome . for his manye tales,

Ouer al yhowted . and yhote trusse (II. 216-218)

until the pardoners had pity on him. *Cr1* misunderstood *to-lugged of manye* and wrote *to be lodged of manye*, but made no further alteration in the passage. So in *Cr1* Liar is given lodgings in many houses, though he is bid pack everywhere! *Cr2* and *Cr3* have *to-lugged* correctly (printed *to-bugged* in some copies of *Cr2*).

Since *Cr2* corrects many errors of *Cr1* and has very few original mistakes, it is reasonable to assume that Crowley corrected his second edition from a MS. But he probably printed his third edition directly, and somewhat carelessly, from the second without having fresh recourse to the MS., for *Cr3* has practically all the characteristics of *Cr2* and, in addition, numerous fresh errors. Yet *Cr2* is not more reliable than *Cr1*—as a matter of fact

<sup>41</sup> This point is dealt with in some detail pp. 524-526.

<sup>42</sup> Professor Skeat says Crowley is responsible for the blunder, which has persisted until now, of identifying Pierce with the dreamer (B-text p. xxxv. note 3), but the heading of *C2* is "The Prophecies of Piers Plowman.' Crowley seems to have been afraid of the 'prophecies'; see his notes—'This is no prophecy but a resonable gathering' (III. 282 *Cr2*, *Cr3*); and—'This is no prophecy but a pronostication' (VI. 325 *Cr3*).

the text of the second edition is somewhat adulterated. Crowley had access to several MSS. One of his MSS. belonged to the C-text<sup>43</sup>, and he may have known a MS. of the A-text,<sup>44</sup> but he made practically no use of either. In addition to these he had at least two MSS. of the B-text. The first, from which he printed *Cr1*, was a cognate of *W*; the second belonged to the group  $\omega$ . *Cr1* is a pure, somewhat inaccurate, text of the *W* type, *Cr2* and *Cr3* are based on the same MS. as *Cr1*, but have important readings belonging to the group  $\omega$ . It is therefore possible that the correct readings of *Cr2* and *Cr3* are insertions from Crowley's second B-text MS: and were not in the MS. from which *Cr1* was printed. This possibility detracts greatly from the value of *Cr2* and *Cr3* as pure representatives of their group, and consequently as checks upon *W* and *Cr1*. Again, Crowley did not feel obliged to reproduce his MS. exactly, but modified his text to simplify a difficult passage or to suit the prejudices of his age; so readings of *Cr* must be regarded with caution.

*W* and *Cr* form the group  $\tau$ . *Cr* is not descended from *W*, and *W*, a fourteenth century MS., is obviously not descended from *Cr*. There is no absolute proof that *W* is not derived from Crowley's MS. or vice versa, but the characteristic errors of *Cr* and *W* practically exclude the possibility. It has been noted already that *W* sometimes differs from the other B-MSS; these variations of *W* may represent a true B-text tradition or may be merely individual errors; here *Cr* would have been valuable as an index of *W*'s faults, but *Cr* has been contaminated. So in group  $\tau$  we have only one reliable MS., *W*, with no very good check on its original mistakes.

*L* and *W* are, in each case, the only trustworthy representatives of their groups, practically they can receive neither criticism nor support from their cognates. Where *L* and *W* agree there is a fairly strong presumption that they are right; where they differ it is sometimes impossible to decide between the two readings. Here  $\omega$ , the third group, can often give the casting vote.

3. Group  $\omega$ . In group  $\omega$  there are six MSS., *C B Y O C2 G2*: one of the least important, *C* (MS. Dd. 1. 17. Univ. Lib. Camb.) shall be dismissed first.

<sup>43</sup> See Crowley's Introduction—note to VI. 328.

<sup>44</sup> See *Cr2*, *Cr3*. Pro. 215-221.

Primarily one is inclined to think well of *C*, which forms part of a neatly written, well-preserved MS. A very little investigation, however, soon reveals that it has numerous errors and omissions which often produce sheer nonsense. The scribe of *C* was careless and dishonest, he was also so indifferent that he had no objection to writing a meaningless line. The student does not grumble at him for his want of invention, for a faithful rendering of an original is obviously of more value than an unfaithful one, however interesting the latter may be; but his carelessness in copying has very greatly negated the advantage that should have resulted from his lack of initiative.

*C* may be a composite MS., the point of junction being about the end of Passus IV. This theory is founded mainly on *C*'s readings in one or two difficult passages in the Prologue and first few Passus, where *C* agrees with *L* in what is probably an erroneous reading, and disagrees with the group  $\omega$ , with which from the end of Passus IV onwards it is in the closest agreement.

*B*<sup>45</sup> (MS. Bodley 814), the MS. most nearly related to *C*, is a poor MS., often corrupted by some absurd mistake.

'Witte' tells the poet of the Creation, how God made man—

And Eue of his ribbe-bon . with-outen eny mene. (IX. 34)

This MS. alters *mene* to *mede*

And Eue of his ribbon . wiþouten eny mede.

*B* is a composite MS. From the Prologue to about the middle of Passus III it presents an extraordinary confusion of A-, B- and C-texts; after the end of Passus III there are only sporadic A- or C-text readings, which soon cease altogether.<sup>46</sup>

As soon as *B* settles down into a pure B-text, i.e. about the middle of Passus III, it is closely connected with *C*, yet neither *C* nor *B* is derived from the other, they are descended independently

<sup>45</sup> The three MSS. *B*, *BM* and *Cot* derive from a common ancestor (*B*) and are so closely connected with each other that in this paper *BM* and *Cot* are not distinguished from *B*, except in the variant readings of the extracts from the reconstructed B-text.

<sup>46</sup> The fragment *J* contains between two and three hundred lines taken at random from a text closely resembling that of *B*, with the characteristic A- and C-text contamination in the Prologue and first three Passus. Only 17 lines of the Passus which are discussed in this paper are transcribed in *J*; consequently this MS. has been of very little use.

from their common ancestor "C." The resemblance between *C* and *B* is remarkable, in fact from the latter part of Passus III onwards, *C B* is one of the most frequently recurring groups in the textual variations of the B-text. Consequently *B* from the end of Passus IV onwards has, in common with its cognate *C*, the peculiarities of group  $\omega$ . But "C" cannot have been a very good representative of its group. It abounds in mistakes of the most ridiculous kind. Here are some examples:

1. Conscience arraigns Mede before the king; among his charges are:

. . . she is fauorable to þe fals . and fouleth trewthe ofte. (III. 153)

"C" reads *folweþ* for *fouleth*.

2. Conscience prophecies that an age will come when Mede shall be dethroned:

Ac loue and lowenesse . and lewte togederes,  
þise shul be maistres on molde . treuthe to saue. (III. 289, 290)

Here "C" has the remarkable mistake *lewidnesse* for *lowenesse*.

*C* and *B* are the worst MSS. of the group  $\omega$ , they are valuable only in so far as they can be used to criticise one of the better  $\omega$  MSS., e.g., *Y* (MS. Newn. Coll. Camb.).

*Y* has a high value as the best representative of the third group of the B-text MSS. It is of an early date and derived from a good MS. Unhappily the scribe was not always faithful.

Witte's statement about thieves and liars that they—

Conceyued ben in yuel tyme . as caym was on Eue. (IX. 120)

troubled a good many of the scribes, *Y* among them, he writes—

Conceyued ben in yuel tyme as caym was of heuene.

*Y*'s mistakes are numerous, but they can often be detected by internal evidence, or by comparison with its nearest cognates *O* (MS. 79 Oriel Coll. Oxf.) and *C2* (MS. Ll. 4.14. Univ. Lib. Camb.).

*O*,<sup>47</sup> which is nearly as good a MS. as *Y*, has been most accurately transcribed from its copy. It has curiously little individuality

<sup>47</sup> The collations of *O* in the accepted B-text are often erroneous. A list of the corrections necessary for this paper is given below:

I.169 of) on; 204. 'trewe' is marked for correction; IV. 9a *O* has this line. V.273 *O* has this line; IX.120 on) of; XII.16. *makynge*s maystries; XVIII. 10. þe [2]) omitted; 17. *domini*) domini etc.; 35. *tua*) tua etc.; XX.259, 260, 261; The order of these lines in *O* is the same as in *L*.

for, with the exception of some few quite trivial matters, it has no readings, good or bad, which are not to be found in one or more of its cognates. A MS. of this type is not necessarily a useless one, and *O* is a very good check on *Y*. Owing to some accident four leaves towards the end of the poem, containing about three hundred lines, are missing. No chance has yet brought these leaves to light, but in *C2*, a complete paper MS. written considerably later than *O* and nearly related to it, we have some indication of what has been lost.

The scribe of *C2* had a bold free spirit and no false regard for truth held him back from giving the world a reasonable narrative. So in cases where the B-text is obscure, or the alliteration defective, and *C2* has good readings which are not met with in other B-MSS., these readings prove, on investigation, to be variations introduced by the scribe. For example:

Conscience tells how God has numbered all things and numbering is good and necessary; he shows that monks and all men of religion (save only the friars) have fixed numbers, and then he talks of kings and their armies:

Kynges . . .  
 . . . if þei wage men to werre . þei write hem in noumbre,  
 Wil no tresorere hem paye . trauaille þei neure so sore.  
 Alle other in bataille . ben yholde bribours,  
 Pilours and pykehernois . in eche a place ycursed. (XX. 258-261)<sup>47</sup>

So the passage stands in most of the B-MSS. It seems as if no soldier is to be paid for his service no matter how stoutly he fights; this, of course, is not the poet's meaning. The poet meant to point out that only those soldiers who duly enter the king's service will be recognised and rewarded after the battle. Clearly there has been a corruption of the text here. Some of the scribes tried to improve the passage. *C2* adds what seems to be a line of his own:

Woll no tresourer wages hem paie . taille þey neuere so sore,  
 But he kunne rekene ariȝt . her names in his rollis,  
 Alle opere . . . etc.

The C-text has a line of similar import; this is the obvious way out of the difficulty and does not prove any connection of *C2* with the C-text.

*O* and *C2* are descended from a common ancestor "O." It has been thought that *C2* is derived from *O*, in which case, except for the preservation of the three hundred lines missing from *O*, it would have been useless; but it is much more probable, that *O* and *C2* are derived independently from their common ancestor "O." *O* and *C2* have many common errors, they add and omit the same lines and have the same false readings. Instances are: 1. They both omit the essential line which sums up the whole of Holy Church's teaching:

Whan alle tresores arne ytried . treuthe is þe beste. (I. 133)

and also the important line describing the part played by Fauel in the preliminaries to Mede's marriage; he fetched her—

And as a brokour brouȝte hir . to be with fals enioigned. (II. 65)

2. As Holy Church takes her leave of the dreamer she repeats her dictum:

For-þi I sey as I seide . ere by þe textis,  
Whan alle tresores ben ytryed . treuthe is þe beste.  
(I. 204, 205).

In most of the B-MSS. the alliteration of the second half of the first line is defective, a fault probably inherited from the archetypal B-MS.  $\beta$ . "O" saw something was wrong and determined to improve matters; unfortunately he did not remember a similar line—

For-þi I sey as I seide ere . bi siȝte of þise textis. (I. 132)

which would have given him the necessary correction, so he adds an adjective *trew*e and gives the line double alliteration s:s :: t:t—

Forþi I seye as I seyde erst . bi þe trewe<sup>48</sup> textis.

In some places towards the end of the poem *C2* deserts *O* and agrees with *G2*. There is not, at present, enough evidence to show whether such cases are sporadic or whether they indicate some closer connection of *C2* and *G2* than has yet been recognised.

*G* (MS. Gg. 4.31. Univ. Lib. Camb.), the last MS. of the group  $\omega$ , is, in some ways, the most interesting of the B-MSS. It is a late MS., probably as late as the middle of the sixteenth century, carelessly and loosely written throughout in the same hand. The

<sup>48</sup> In *O* 'trew' is marked for correction, but no alternative is given.

A very little investigation showed *G* to be a composite MS., the point of junction, which is not very clearly marked, being about the end of Passus VII. It is also possible that the Prologue, Passus I and II are not derived from the same MS. as Passus III-VII.

1. Liar, fleeing from the king, could find no refuge

he was more wellcome . for hys many mery tales,  
ouerall ionnyted . and hoted to curse.

Ich haue mete more þan ynough . ac nauȝt so moche worship  
 As þo þat seten atte syde-table . or with þe souereignes of  
 þe halle,  
 But sitte as a begger bordeless . bi my-self on þe grounde.  
 (XII. 199–201.)

iche haue meyte more then inoghe but not so moche  
 worshyppe . . .  
 but sytt as beggers bredles. . . .

$G1$  will be considered later;  $G2$ , since it belongs to group  $\omega$ , can be dealt with here.

G2 is not among the best of the  $\omega$  MSS. It seems to have very few good readings which are not common to one or more of its cognates, and it has many individual errors, but these do not obscure the fact that G2 is a perfectly consistent text showing a close agreement with five other B-text MSS. This is remarkable when one considers the date at which G2 was written.

The six MSS. *C B Y O C2 G2* have common characteristics which class them together into the group  $\omega$ . Of these MSS. Prof. Skeat collated *C O B*; roughly, wherever *C O B* occur in the collations of the accepted B-text *C2* and *Y* may be added; from Passus VIII onwards *G2* may be added. The composition of  $\omega$  is not constant throughout the poem. It will be remembered that *C* and *B* only agree with the group  $\omega$  from the end of Passus IV onwards and that *G2* exists from the beginning of Passus VIII only.<sup>49</sup> Consequently up to the end of Passus IV  $\omega$  is represented by *Y O C2*, and up to the end of Passus VII  $\omega$  is represented by *C B Y O C2*.

The characteristics of  $\omega$  are unmistakable; they include the omission of essential lines, the insertion of spurious lines, and various corruptions and confusions of the text. For instance:

1. Charity may be rich or poor, of high estate or of low, in *ragged wedes* or in *riche robes*, and  $\omega$  adds:

And clenlich ycloþed . in cipres & in tartaryne. (XV. 224)

Neither  $\lambda$  nor  $\tau$  have a trace of this line.

2. The poet is reproved for *makyng*, for there are already enough books, and he would do better to say his psalter:

And þow medlest þe with makynge . and myȝtest go sey

þi sauter,

And bidde for hem þat ȝiueth þe bred; . for þere ar bokes ynowe.

(XII. 16, 17).

$\omega$  reads *maistries* for *makynges*.<sup>50</sup> *Maistries* is reasonable here as far as the sense of the line goes, but the context *for þere ar bokes ynowe* makes it clear that *makynges* is the correct reading.

<sup>49</sup> It is perhaps significant that the breaks in these composite MSS. coincide with the natural divisions of the poem (Pro.-Pass. IV, Pro.-Pass. VII). Does this suggest that MSS. containing portions only of the poem were in circulation? The break in *B* (in the middle of Pass. III) is a different matter; the original of *B* was mutilated up to that point, and the copyist had to make up the missing portions as well as he could.

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 47, p. 507.



*Y* and *O* are the best  $\omega$  MSS., they can be criticised and corrected with the help of their cognates and of each other; in this way their original errors can be eliminated and a very fair idea of their common ancestor, the archetypal  $\omega$ , can be obtained.

*G1* may be discussed here. The important point about this MS. is this—that it frequently differs from all the other B-MSS., and that these peculiar readings seem sometimes to be genuine B-text readings which do not occur in any other B-text MS. The isolation of *G1* suggests that we have here a B-text tradition different from that of the other B-MSS., all of which derive from one faulty original; the number of correct readings found only in *G1* suggests that this new tradition is of great value.

*G1* presents some curious problems. The Prologue, Passus I and II have characteristics of a well-marked type of B-MS., the *W Cr* group, but in Passus III-VII there are only sporadic *W Cr* readings. For instance:

In the fable of the Rats' Parliament *W G1* and *Cr1*<sup>51</sup> omit the essential line (Pro. 170) which describes the Belling of the Cat:

And hangen it [the bell] vp-on þe cattes hals . þanne here  
we mowen

Two other lines are omitted by *G1 W Cr*<sup>52</sup> and there are some verbal coincidences. The only thing of importance here is the omission of the same three lines in *G1 W Cr*; and this, which indicates a connection of *G1 W Cr*, is in contradiction to the points noted later which imply that *G1* is an independent B-MS. *G1*, then, has some of the characteristic errors of *W Cr*, but *W Cr* have none of the characteristics which suggest that *G1* is an independent B-text MS. The erroneous readings common to *G1 W* and *Cr* could be explained as corrections from a *W Cr* type written into an ancestor of *G1*, or vice versa, and then incorporated in the text in the next copying. This does not touch the difficulty of the missing lines; it does not seem likely that a corrector would erase an obviously essential line from his MS., just because that line was wanting in the copy from which he was correcting.

Perhaps this part of *G1* (Pro.—Pass. II) is itself a composite MS. due to some combination of an independent B-MS. and a

<sup>51</sup> *Cr1* is most certainly freer from contamination and nearer to *W* than *Cr2* and *Cr3*, which have insertions from other MSS. Many errors common to *W* and *Cr1* are corrected in *Cr2* and *Cr3*. See p. 505.

<sup>52</sup> Pass. I.145 omitted *W G1 Cr*; Pass. II. 186 omitted *W G1 Cr1*.

MS. of the *W Cr* type, while the latter part of *G1* (Pass. III-VII) is descended only from the independent B-MS. In the century and a half which elapsed between the appearance of the B-text and the writing of *G* there were endless opportunities for copying and cross copying between the *Piers Plowman* MSS. There is no extant B-MS. to bridge the gap (ca. 100 years) between *C2*, (which except *G* itself is the latest of the B-MSS.) and *G*,<sup>53</sup> so we have nothing but the internal evidence of *G* to show how it was produced. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the problems raised by a part of *G* are very disturbing. Further collation of all the B-MSS. may resolve some of these difficulties.

In addition to the agreement with *W Cr* in Pro. Pass. I and II, the whole of *G1* has readings which are also in the A-text. Some of these readings occur also in the C-text and so, as has been shown in the earlier part of this paper, should be in the B-text. The presence in *G1* of genuine B-text readings which are not found in any other B-MS., inclines one to think that *G1* represents an independent B-tradition, but the possibility that *G1* may owe its correct readings to contamination from A- or C-texts must not be ignored. As a matter of fact contamination from the C-text is hardly possible in this case, as *G1* has no characteristic C-text readings. Again, collation of *G1* with the A-text suggests most forcibly that *G1* does not owe its peculiar good readings to contamination from the A-text, but that, on the contrary, they are genuine B-text readings inherited from a B-ancestor, i.e. that *G1* represents an independent B-tradition. The reasons for these conclusions follow.

The collation of the B-MSS. which has been undertaken for this article shows that the accepted B-text is faulty in 113 cases in Prologue, Passus I and II, and in 14 at least of these cases *G1* is the only B-MS. to have the correct reading. For example:

1. Holy Church, quoting St. James' doctrine of justification by works, says that faith is:

. . . as ded as a dore-tre . but ȝif þe dedes folwe. (I.185).

*G1* alone of the B-MSS. reads *dorre nayle* for *dore-tre*. *Dead as a door nail* is in common use from the middle English period downwards, but there seems to be no other example of the phrase *dead as a door tree*. The A- and C-texts have *dore-nail*, and this should be the reading of the B-text.

<sup>53</sup> The corrupt *F* is not considered.

*G1* and the A-text have *meyny* for *men*, a better reading, though *men* is good. *G1*'s *meyny* can hardly have been derived from

*men*, it must come from an original '*meyny*.' Again the C-text agrees with the accepted B-text.

3. 'Glotoun,' after a day in the ale-house, totters home and is put to bed:

And after al þis excesse . he had an accidie,  
þat he slepe saterday and sonday . til sonne ȝede to reste.  
(V. 366, 367).

(*an accidie* is an attack of sloth). *G1*, MSS. *V T H* of the A-text, and MS. *I* of the C-text agree that the *excesse* was followed by an '*acces*,' i.e. a fever. This is a possible result of a drinking bout, but here the following lines show that 'Glotoun' slept for two days, which he certainly would not have done had he been in a fever. *Acces*, then, is an early corruption appearing in all three versions. No other B-MS. has this corruption.

Of the nine cases where A-text contamination of *G1* is suspected, the quotation just given is the only one where the internal evidence supports one reading rather than another; so external evidence, i.e. the evidence of the C-text, must be called in to decide which is likely to be the genuine B-text reading, that of *G1* and the A-text, or that of the accepted B-text. In four of the nine cases the C-text is missing, in one case the C-MSS. are divided, so there remain four cases where the C-text agrees with the reading of the accepted B-text against *G1* and the A text. These last four cases may be the result of A-text contamination of *G1*.

It is difficult to see how the 66 minor agreements of *G1* with the A-text can be A-text contaminations. A scribe contaminating one MS. from another would hardly select so many unimportant matters—one would expect to find remarkable variations noted or whole lines inserted. Now *G1* has not one characteristic A-text line, and has only nine notable A-text variations, and these are not characteristic of any one known A-text MS. or group of A-text MSS. It is probably nearer the truth to assume that *G1* is an independent B-MS. This is all the more likely as against the four cases where *G1* may be a contaminated MS. must be set at least fourteen cases where *G1* is the only B-MS. to preserve the true B-text reading.

So it appears that *G1* is of great value; it is not possible to estimate its worth with any degree of accuracy until all the B-MSS. have been fully collated from the Prologue to the end of Passus

VII. Owing to numerous bad readings, many of them due to the date at which it was written, *G1* could not be made the basis of a new text of this portion of *Piers Plowman* (Prologue—Passus VII), but it can be used with advantage to correct texts founded on other B-text MSS.

The table<sup>54</sup> on the following page shows the general connection of the B-MSS. with each other.

This classification of MSS. agrees with the greater number of facts known at present, but it is based on an examination of about one-third of the poem, and further collation may modify the relationship.

Professor Skeat divided the B-MSS. into four groups.

- |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| I. <i>L R.</i>           | III. <i>O C2.</i> |
| II. <i>Y C B BM Cot.</i> | IV. <i>W Cr.</i>  |

He did not group the remaining MSS.<sup>55</sup> The fuller information now available allows some slight alteration to be made in this classification. *Y* has no characteristics of *C B BM Cot* which are not shared by *O C2*, so *Y* should not be separated from *O C2* and placed in group II. It is more accurate to group these seven MSS. *O C2 Y C B BM Cot* together and then divide them into the sub-groups as in the table given below.

Dr. Kron<sup>56</sup> constructed a table showing the relationship of all the B-MSS., although he had no material except that published by Professor Skeat. He groups *M* rightly with *L* and *R*, otherwise his classification is correct only where it follows Professor Skeat's. In his table Dr. Kron derives all the extant B-MSS. from *L* (this is his interpretation of the theory that *L* represents the autograph of the poet) but does not seem to realize that in so doing he makes them valueless.

#### ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF THE EXISTING B-TEXT MSS

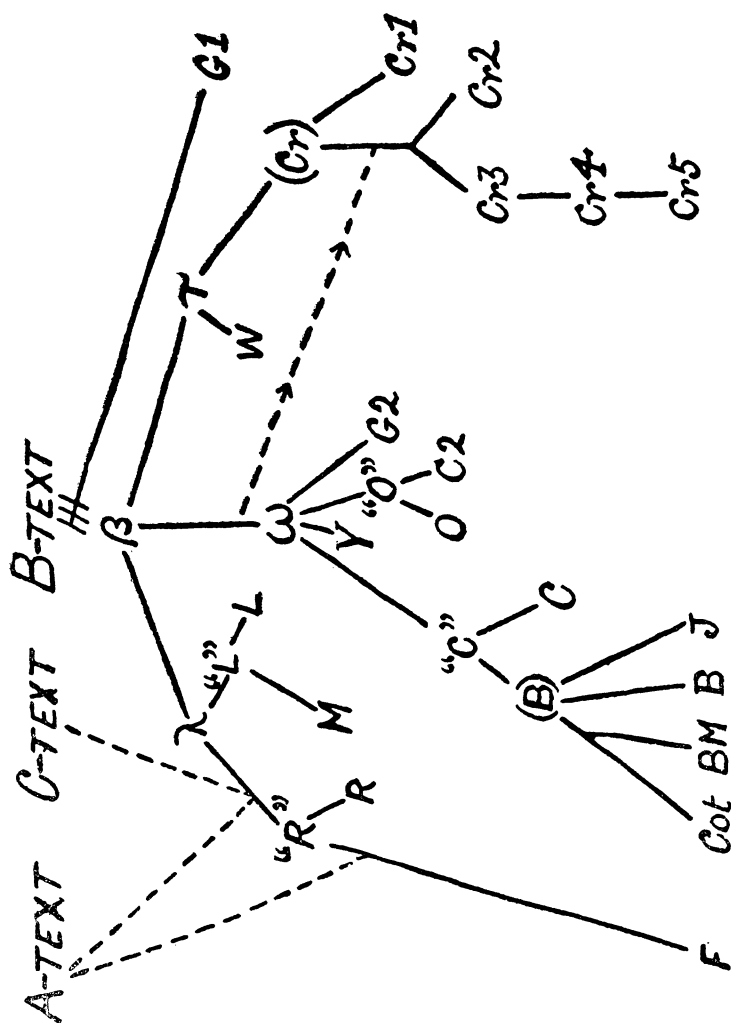
In estimating the value of the B-text MSS. it was found convenient to conduct three investigations. The first deals with the errors of the accepted B-text, i.e. *L*, in those passages of the selected passus<sup>57</sup> where the A-, B- and C-texts are sufficiently alike to be

<sup>54</sup> See footnote 26, p. 495.

<sup>55</sup> B-text p. xxxi.

<sup>56</sup> "Buch von Peter dem Pflüger." pp. 27, 28, 36, 38. The symbols used in this paper are substituted for those of Dr. Kron.

<sup>57</sup> Prol.—Pass. II, Pass. VIII, IX, XII, XVIII.



"C" exists only from the middle of Pass. III. It belongs to group "C" Pass. V-XX.

C in Prologue Pass I and II has some readings characteristic of L.

(B) is contaminated from the A- and C-texts Prologue—middle of Pass. III.

G1 exists only Prologue—Pass. VII.

G2 exists only Passus VIII-XX.

compared with each other; the second with the errors of *L* in the remaining passages of the selected passus; the third with the errors of all the B-text MSS. in the whole of the selected passus.<sup>58</sup>

# I

The first investigation deals with a comparison of the A-, B- and C- texts. If it is certain

- a) that the C-text was written from a B-text,
- b) that the B-text was written from an A-text,
- c) that the C-text is not contaminated from the A-text,

then it follows that all cases where the A-<sup>59</sup> and C-texts<sup>60</sup> agree against the B-text must be cases where the accepted B-text is faulty, and where it must be emended to agree with the reading of the other versions.

This comparison yielded numerous corrections of the accepted B-text.

## 1. The Friars

Preched þe peple . for profit of hem-seluen. (B. Pro. 59)

All A- and C-text MSS. read much more forcibly:

Prechinge þe peple . for profit of here wombe. (A. Pro. 56. C. I. 57)

No B-text MS. has this reading.<sup>61</sup>

2. Lady Holychurch warns the Dreamer against the rabble who run about Mede:

Know hem þere if þow canst . and kepe þi tonge. (B. II. 46)

The A- and C-MSS. agree in a better reading:

Knowe hem þere ȝif þou canst . and kep þe from hem alle.  
(A. II. 29; C. III. 47).

No B-text MS. has this reading.

<sup>58</sup> It is not easy to say exactly how many lines are alike in the A-, B- and C-texts; in lines which are for the most part the same there is occasionally a variation of a few words. Lines are counted as alike in all three versions, if they have at least half the line in common. On this basis there are in the selected passus (containing 1714 lines) 499 lines common to the A-, B- and C-texts. In these passus there are also 146 lines where the resemblance between the A-, B- and C-texts is not very close, and 1069 original B- lines.

<sup>59</sup> See footnote 13, p. 492.

<sup>60</sup> See footnote 22, pp. 493-494.

<sup>61</sup> This statement is always limited by the fact that two B-text MSS., *A<sub>s</sub>* and *Ph*, have not been available.

## 3. Wit describes the Lady Anima and her Castle Caro:

Anima she hatte . ac enuye hir hateth,  
 A proude pryker of Fraunce . Prynceps huius mundi.  
 (B. IX. 7, 8)

The A- and C-texts disagree with this personification of Envy and his identification with the prince of this world; they read:

Anima heo hette . To hire hap Envye  
 A proud priker of Fraunce . Princeps huius mundi.  
 (A. X. 7, 8. C. XI. 133, 134)

*Envy* meaning *desire* is very well authenticated in Middle English. No B-text MS. has this reading.

## 4. Lady Holychurch refers to the teaching of justification by works:

For Iames þe gentil . iugged in his bokes  
 That faith with-oute þe faite . is riȝte no þinge worthi.  
 (B. I. 183, 184)

All C-text MSS. and most A-text MSS. agree:

þat feiþ wiþoute fait . is feblere þan nouȝt. (A. I. 160;  
 C. II. 183)

giving a line with better alliteration; for, though *without* may alliterate, the alliteration in such a case almost always runs on *o*, hardly ever on *w*.

No B-text MS. has this reading.

A few of the emendations of the accepted B-text obtained from a comparison of the A- and C-texts are found in one or more of the B-text MSS.

## 5. Lady Mede's dress is described, with defective alliteration, as:

Purfilid with pelure . þe finest vpon erþe. (B. II. 9)

All the C-MSS., many A-MSS. and *F*, alone of the B-MSS, read:

I-purfilid wiþ pelure . þe pureste in erþe. (A. II. 9; C. III. 10)

## 6. The poet speaks of foolish men who are deceived by pardoners:

Thus þey geuen here golde . glotones to kepe,  
 And leueth such loseles . þat lecherye haunten.  
 (B. Pro. 76, 77)

The second line is unnecessary, for one would not give money to



pardoners unless one believed in them. The A- and C-texts read:

þus ʒe ʒeuen ʒoure gold . glotonis to helpe  
And leuiþ it loselis<sup>62</sup> . þat leccherie haunten (A. Pro. 73, 74;  
C. I. 74, 75)

Four B-text MSS. (*Y W Cr Gl*) agree with the A- and C-texts in reading *it* after *leueth*, and a fifth, *M*, has *it* added in another hand.

7. When Conscience refuses to kiss Mede unless Reason agree to it, the king commands him to fetch Reason:

For he shal reule my rewme . and rede me þe beste,  
And acounte with þe, conscience . so me cryst helpe,  
How þow lernest þe peple . þe lered and þe lewede.  
(B. IV. 9-11)

The A- and C-texts read:

For he shal rewele my reaume . and rede me þe beste  
Of mede and of mo opere . what man shal hire wedde  
And counte wiþ consience—so me crist helpe—  
How þou lerist þe peple . þe lerid and þe lewid. (A. IV. 9-12·  
C. V. 9-12)

In the accepted B-text, Reason is to rule the kingdom, give the king good advice and see that Conscience is leading the people in the right way. Since the government of the land is to be handed over to someone else, it is not quite clear what the king is to be advised about, or why he should need advice rather than his subjects; there is also no mention of Mede's marriage which is the direct cause of Reason's being summoned to court. The A- and C-texts clear up the difficulty quite simply by the preservation of a line explaining that advice is to be given to the king:

Of mede and of mo opere . what man shal hire wedde.  
(A IV. 10; C. V. 10)

i.e. the whole question of Mede, which has puzzled king and council and 'almost shent' the kingdom, is to be settled forever. All Reason's work is to be universal and supremely important. *Y O*<sup>63</sup> C2, three B-MSS. which are closely connected, and Crowley's later versions preserve this line.<sup>64</sup>

In none of these cases is it recommended that the accepted B-text should be altered to agree with the A- or C-texts simply

<sup>62</sup> And lenep it to loreles . . . (C-text I. 75).

<sup>63</sup> See footnote 47, p. 507.

<sup>64</sup> This interesting example is not from the selected passus, consequently it is not counted in the total of *L*'s errors.

because it differs from them: for there is always some other determining factor or factors; in 4 and 5 the emendation improves the alliteration, in 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 the emended readings are more vigorous than those of the accepted B-text.

This comparison of the accepted B-text with the A- and C-texts resulted in 161 emendations in 499 lines—of these 69 occur in no B-MS. and 25 occur in one or more of the doubtful MSS. *R*<sup>65</sup> *F*. This leaves 67 cases where *L* has a reading inferior to that of one or more of the uncontaminated B-MSS; of these better readings 14 occur in *G1* only, 4 in *W* only, while *M B G2 Cr* have 2 each. There remain 41 cases where the emendation is supported by more than one of the B-MSS.<sup>66</sup> These figures show that *G1* and *W* (possibly *O* and *C2* should be added to them) are probably better MSS. than *Y M* etc., but the differences in the figures are so slight that it is not wise to base conclusions on them.

So ends the first investigation.

## II

The business of the second investigation was to examine the remaining lines of the selected passus, and, where possible, to compare them with the corresponding passages of the A- and C-texts.

A. In some cases all the B-MSS. have a bad or even a senseless reading.

1. According to the popular medieval legend God sent an angel to warn Seem (a common error for Seth) that his issue must not marry with Cain's. But Seem was disobedient:

ȝet some, aȝein þe sonde . of owre saueoure of heuene,  
Caymes kynde & his kynde . coupled togideres,  
(IX. 126, 127)

This is the reading of all the B-MSS; obviously *some* should be *seem*. *M* has *seem* added over an erasure.

2. 'Ymagynatyf' tells the Dreamer of the great Unfortunate,

<sup>65</sup> *R* lacks Prologue 1-124 and Passus I. 138-II. 39.

<sup>66</sup> *F* supports 30 of these emendations, *G1* 27, *W* 22, *Cr* 22, *O* 18, *C2* 18, *Y* 11, *M* 10, *G2* 7, *C* 6, *R* 4, *B* 3.

Solomon, Alexander, Rosamund, that:

Catel and kynde witte . was combraunce to hem alle, . . .  
(XII, 46)

And riche renkes riȝt so . gaderen and sparen,  
And þo men þat þei moste haten . mynistren it atte laste;  
And, for þei suffren & se . so many nedy folkes, 55  
And loue hem nouȝt as owre lorde byt . lesen her soules;

*Date & dabitur vobis, &c.*

[So catel and kende wit . acombren ful many;  
Wo is hym þat hem weldeth . but if he hem [wel] despende;

*Scientes et non facientes varijs flagellis vapulabunt;*

Sapience, seith þe boke . swelleth a mannes soule,

*Sapientia inflat, &c.;*

And richesse riȝt so . but if þe Rote be trewe; 60

Ac grace is a graspe þer-of . þo greuaunces to abate.

(XII. 53-61)

So the passage stands in the accepted B-text; but the three bracketed lines are found only in the doubtful MSS. *R* and *F*; all the pure B-MSS. omit them and, consequently, the reading of the pure B-MSS. is senseless. Clearly the pure B-MSS. have lost something between

And loue hem nouȝt as owre lorde byt . lesen her soules;  
*Date & dabitur vobis, &c.* (XII. 56).

and

And richesse riȝt so . but if þe Rote be trewe; (XII. 60).

but it is not clear that *R* and *F* supply accurately what the pure B-MSS. have lost. As a matter of fact two of these *R F* lines

So catel and kende wit . acombren ful many;  
Wo is hym þat hem weldeþ . but if he hem [wel] despende;  
*Scientes et non facientes varijs flagellis vapulabunt;*  
(XII, 57, 58).

are out of place in the B-text since they are merely an amplification of

Catel and kynde witte . was combraunce to hem alle, (XII. 46)

just above; also they are practically identical with two lines of the C-text:

Ac catel and kynde witt . encombreþ ful menye;  
Woo is hym that hem weldeþ . bote he hem wel dispeyne;  
*Scientes et non facientes uariis flagellis vapulabunt.*  
(C-text XV, 17, 18).

and this is in a passage where the B- and C-texts vary considerably from each other. So it seems most probable that the occurrence of these two lines in *R F* is due to contamination from the C-text. The case is quite different with the third *R F* line—

Sapience, seith þe boke . swelleth a mannes soule,  
*Sapientia inflat, &c.* (XII. 59).

This is *not* in the C-text, it *is* necessary for the sense of the B-text and is almost certainly a genuine B-text line.

B. In several cases the reading of *L* was found to be distinctly inferior to that of other B-text MSS.

1. In the struggle between Life and Death, Death says he will have the mastery; but Life answers that he will overcome Death. *L* reads:

Lyf seyth þat he likth . and leyth his lif to wedde,  
 þat for al þat deth can do . within þre days,  
 To walke and feeche fro þe fende . piers fruite þe plowman.  
 (XVIII. 31–33)

i.e. Life says what pleases him, and pledges his life that he will defeat Death. A much stronger reading is that of *M C B Y O C2 G2 W* and the C-text:

Lif saith þat he lieþ . and leyth his lif to wedde,

i.e., Life says that Death lies, and pledges his life etc.<sup>67</sup>

2. The poet recalls the royal prerogative of pardoning an offender condemned to death:

. . . gif þe Kynge of þat kyngedome . come in þat tyme,  
 There þe feloun thole sholde . deth or otherwyse,  
 Lawe wolde, he ȝeue hym lyf . if he loked on hym.  
 (XVIII. 379–381)

*C2 G2* and *W* read:

þer þe felon þole shuld . deth or oper Iuwise.

and the C-text has correctly—

Ther a þeof þoly sholde . deþ oper Iuwise. (C. XXI. 427)

*Iuwise* (sentence, execution) is far better than the weak *or otherwyse* of the accepted B-text.

<sup>67</sup> The glossary of the accepted B-text gives *likth* as pres. indic. of *liȝen*. Neither Mätzner's Glossary nor the New English Dictionary recognize *likth* as a form of *liȝen*. *Likth* probably came into this line from l. 34, below.

3. Learning must be honoured, it must not be 'contraryed with crabbed wordes,' so at the Nativity:

To pastours and to poetes . appiered þat aungel,  
And bad hem go to bethlem . goddis burth to honoure,  
(XII.149, 150)

This is the reading of *L M*. For some hundreds of lines this is the only reference to the angel who announced the birth of Christ, so *þat aungel* is clearly wrong. *W Cr C B Y O C2 G2* and all MSS. (except one) of the C-text read:

To pastours and to poetes . appered the aungel.

*R* and *F* have *an aungel*.

There are a few obscure passages in the B-text where *W* alone of the B-MSS. has an intelligible line. A little investigation shows that *W*'s good readings at these points are most probably scribal emendations and were not in the MS. from which it was copied. For instance:

'Ymagynatif' discusses Benefit of Clergy and the penitent thief:

<i>Dominus pars hereditatis mee</i> . is a meri verset,	189
þat has take fro tybourne . twenti stronge þeues;	
þere lewed theues ben lolled vp . loke how þei be saued!	
þe thef þat had grace of god . on gode fryday as þow speke,	
Was, for he þelte hym creaunt to cryst on þe crosse . &	
knewleched hym gulty,	193
And grace axed of god . and he is euer redy	
þat boxomeliche biddeth it . and ben in wille to amenden	
hem. (X11.189–195) <sup>68</sup>	

*F* and *W* do not agree with the reading of this difficult passage. *F* has a fair reading here, but this, as is often the case with *F*,

<sup>68</sup> 193. *Was, for he*) þat was for þat he B, obviously due to a misunderstanding of *Was at the beginning of the line. . on . . . &*) & vpon a cros R; knewleched) know C: knew B O C2 Y G2; hym) R omits; F has Was for he 3alded hym to chryst & knowleched hym gylty.

194. RF omit. and he is euer redy) þat to graunten it is redy W.

195. þat) þam B; To hem þat W; hem) hym B G2. F- & buxum was in meende his mercy was to craue.

must be due to the scribe. *W*'s variants are adopted by Prof. Skeat for the accepted B-text:

þe þeef . . .  
Was for he yald hym creaunt to Crist on the cros . and knewliched  
hym gilty

And grace asked of god . þat to graunten it is redy  
To hem þat buxomliche biddeth it . and ben in wille to amenden  
hem.

Prof. Skeat, in his Critical Note to this passage, says<sup>69</sup> that line 193 is undoubtedly too long and that "the reading of MS. *W* must be adopted in order to preserve the alliteration, and, indeed, in order to make sense . . . I believe the right reading to be as in the text, only the words & *knewleched hym gulty* should be struck out, and the metrical pause in l.193 placed after *creaunt*. Crowley has a different and very unsatisfactory reading:

Was for he knew Christ on y<sup>e</sup> cros . & knowlegid his sinne,  
And grace asked of god, & he is euer ready  
That buxomlyche byddeth it, & ben in wyl to amend hem."

It might be argued that here *W* has preserved a correct reading while the other B-MSS. are wrong, but there are two objections to this.

(a) The B-MSS. fall into three groups  $\lambda$  (*L M R F*),  $\omega$  (*C B O C2 Y G2*) and  $\tau$  (*W Cr*), representing three fairly independent traditions of almost equal value. There are here two whole groups,  $\lambda$  and  $\omega$ , and *Cr* which is half of the third group  $\tau$ , agreeing against one MS. *W*.

(b) It is very significant that *Cr*, which generally agrees with *W*, has here, in all essentials, the same difficult reading as the other B-text MSS. One must not lay too much stress on this point as Crowley is known to have 'edited' his MS., but his corrections are always designed to make the text less obscure, not more so. It is not likely that this passage in Crowley's MS. agreed with *W* and that he altered it to agree with *L* etc. Far more reasonable is the assumption that some scribe of *W* found this obscure passage in his original and altered it. It seems therefore that the archetypal B-MS.  $\beta$  had this passage as it appears in *L* etc. Within a few lines of this passage there is another place

<sup>69</sup> B-text, Critical Note to XII. 192, 193, pp. 409,410. The lines in question are really XII. 193, 194.

(XII. 184, 185) where *W* alone has a satisfactory reading, the rest of the B-MSS., including *Cr*, agreeing in a very difficult version; so that again it must be assumed that  $\beta$  had the harsher reading, and that *W* is sophisticated. Some ancestor of  $\beta$  may have been damaged here, with the result that words or lines were misplaced or lost, and these errors passed on with many others into  $\beta$  and so to the B-MSS.

Other places can be found where *W* has faked his copy.<sup>70</sup>

There are in the selected Passus 1069 original B-text lines, and 146 lines where the resemblance between the A-, B- and C-texts is not well marked. In these lines 26 emendations must be made in the accepted B-text (i.e. *L*); of these emendations 2 are found in no B-text MS., 2 are supported by one MS. only (*G2* has 1, *F* has 1) leaving 22 cases where *L* has a reading inferior to that of more than one B-MS. The MSS. of the  $\tau$  group and the best of the  $\omega$  MSS. have roughly an equal number of these emendations; the  $\lambda$  MSS. have very few of them.<sup>71</sup>

This ends the second investigation.

So far the investigations confirm the opinion that *L* is faulty in some respects. The first investigation shows that *G1 W O C2* are among the better B-MSS., the second suggests that *G2* and *Y* might be added to their number.

### III

The third investigation deals with the errors of all the B-text MSS. in the selected Passus<sup>72</sup> and seeks to determine which of the chief B-MSS. *L G1 W O C2 G2 Y* is the most reliable.

In the third investigation the material obtained from the first two was ignored, as it was desired to obtain an independent criterion of the comparative value of the B-MSS. The readings of all the B-text MSS. for the whole of the selected Passus were examined and faults noted under two headings:

(a) Essential lines or words missing.

(b) Reading distinctly inferior.

(a) gives the best indication of the value of a MS. Care was taken to make (b) as reliable as possible by noting only those readings

<sup>70</sup> Compare the reading of *W* with the accepted B-text XV. 217, 218; XX. 253-255.

<sup>71</sup> *G2* and *B* have 15 each, *C Y O C2* 14 each, *Cr* 13, *W* 12, *M* 9, *F* 4, *R* 3.

<sup>72</sup> Prol.—Pass. II, Pass. VIII, IX, XII, XVIII.

where the alliteration or the sense is inferior; yet it is always possible that a superior reading may be a "felicitous corruption of the scribe." All these results therefore are provisional and are subject to correction when the critical study of the MSS. has proceeded further.

The results were as follows:

	<i>L</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i> <sup>73</sup>	<i>C</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>G2</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Cr1</i> <sup>73</sup>	<i>Cr2</i>	<i>Cr3</i>	<i>G1</i>
(a) Omissions.	12	19	76	93	63	37	28	33	36	26	18	16	15	17	28
(b) Read: inf.:	41	41	89	146	103	110	56	61	82	40	38	66	67	68	36
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	53	60	165	239	166	147	84	94	118	66	56	82	82	85	64

Some comment should be made on these figures.

*R* has lost 252 lines;<sup>74</sup> allowing 28 errors for these lines *R*'s total of errors is 193. In *B* the corrupt Passus<sup>75</sup> (containing 673 lines) have been ignored; allowing 95 mistakes for these lines *B* has 242 errors. *G1* exists up to the end of Passus VII, *G2* exists from Passus VIII onwards; consequently they have only 673 and 1041 lines respectively, of the lines here discussed. Allowing *G1* 99 errors, and *G2* 43 errors for the missing lines, *G1* has a total of 163 errors and *G2* a total of 109 errors.

The comparatively few errors of *M* can be explained in two ways. Firstly, by its connection with *L*, and, secondly, by its numerous corrections, which give, for the most part, very good readings. But, obviously, these good readings of *M* have to be ignored in estimating *M*'s value in group λ. It is not remarkable that *Cr* and *C2* are more faulty than *W* and *O*, to which they are respectively related. *Cr* was printed by a man who was frequently puzzled by his MS., and *C2*, though near to *O*, is considerably later and bears the marks of repeated copyings, each with its possibility of additional errors.

The figures obtained in this third investigation may seem a little puzzling. The first investigation shows that *L* has 161 errors in 499 lines,<sup>76</sup> the second shows 26 errors of *L* in 1215 lines;<sup>77</sup> the third covering the ground dealt with in *both* the previous in-

<sup>73</sup> The errors of *Cr1*, *Cr2*, *Cr3* and *F* are more numerous than here stated, for many cases where they have original corrupt readings have not been noted.

<sup>74</sup> Prol: 1-124, Pass I. 138-II. 39, Pass XVIII. 411-431.

<sup>75</sup> Prol—Pass II.

<sup>76</sup> See p. 521.

<sup>77</sup> See p. 526.



vestigations shows that *L* has only 53 errors in 1714 lines (499+1215). Two things must be remembered here:

(a) Many of the 161 errors of the accepted B-text observed in the first investigation (i.e. a comparison of the A-, B- and C-texts) are in unimportant matters, where the readings could not possibly be called 'distinctly inferior,' and 69 of the 161 errors occur in *all* the B-MSS., making detection from the B-MSS. alone very difficult.

(b) The B-MSS. are generally very good; the differences between them are not important, and, where these are found, it is often impossible to say which of the readings is to be preferred. It follows therefore that in those passages of the B-text for which it is not possible to consult the corresponding A- or C-text, there are certainly many false readings which have not been detected.

According to the figures obtained in this investigation, *L* and *W* are equal in value, while *Y* and *O* are slightly inferior.

An estimate of the value of the groups  $\lambda$ ,  $\tau$  and  $\omega$  would be more useful than that of their representatives *L*, *W* and *Y O* respectively; unfortunately two of these groups ( $\lambda$  and  $\tau$ ) contain only one reliable MS., and the rest of the evidence, in each case, is unsatisfactory.

The Group  $\lambda$ . *R F* are suspected of interpolation from the A- and C-texts; so they have to be ignored in deciding which of *L*'s errors are original, and which belong to the group  $\lambda$ . *M*, the fourth MS. of the group, has been so much corrected that its readings have to be treated with great caution: but there are thirteen cases where *M*, untouched, can correct *L*, so that *L*'s errors are reduced from 53 to 40.

The Group  $\tau$ . *Cr* owes much to its editor and, in the present state of our knowledge, it would be unwise to correct any of *W*'s 56 errors from it.

The Group  $\omega$ . The individual errors of any one MS. can be detected in  $\omega$ , but here again caution is necessary. From the Prologue to Passus IV  $\omega$  consists of three MSS., *Y O C2*. Now *C B* join  $\omega$  about the beginning of Passus V, *G2* joins it about the beginning of Passus VIII. *C B* both before and after they are a part of  $\omega$  are inferior to *Y O*. *G2* is of average goodness; it has few correct readings which are not shared by some other  $\omega$  MS. Since *Y O* belong to  $\omega$  throughout the poem and are the best MSS. of that

group, it is permissible to assume that their errors represent the errors of the MS. from which  $\omega$  derives; 48 of *Y*'s 84 errors and 58 of *O*'s 94 errors can be corrected from one or more of their cognates, so that the errors of  $\omega$  are reduced to 36.

So the third investigation shows that  $\omega$  and *L* are nearly equal in value, while *W* is slightly inferior to them. As a matter of fact  $\omega$  is somewhat inferior to *L*, for it has many more minor errors than *L*, while the number of its major errors is practically the same.

This ends the third investigation.

The first two investigations show that there is not much to choose between  $\omega$  and *W*, but they give little indication of the value of *L*; the third investigation places  $\omega$  a little below *L*, but above *W*. It is hardly possible to estimate the value of *GI*, for while the first investigation shows that from the Prol. to Pass. II it has more of the necessary emendations of the B-text than any other B-MS., the last investigation shows that in the same Passus it has a great number of errors of its own.

This examination of the B-text MSS. confirms Professor Skeat's opinion that *L* is the first authority, but it places  $\omega$  second and *W* third to *L*, and rejects, or treats with caution, the evidence of *R*. It also shows that peculiar readings of *GI* may be of great value.

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF THE B-TEXT

In constructing a B-text the agreement of *L*,  $\omega$  and *W* on any point may be taken as conclusive; where they differ the reading which is supported by any two of them is probably correct. If  $\omega$  and *W* agree against *L*, an uncorrected *M* reading will be of use. *R* *F* are suspected of A- and C-text contamination, yet, in passages where the A- and C- texts are wanting, *R* *F* may give help. It is a little doubtful how far it is safe to use the evidence of *GI* in this reconstruction. As far as is known at present, *GI* represents an independent B-tradition, but this is not quite certain. In the existing state of our knowledge it is best to use *GI* to furnish corroborative evidence only.

The text obtained by this means will be, generally speaking, that of the faulty archetypal  $\beta$  from which all the extant B-text MSS. are descended.<sup>78</sup> Some improvement can be made in this text. Where the A-, B- and C-texts can be compared, it will

<sup>78</sup> *GI* is a possible exception.

be possible to get very near the original B-text; but in the passages where such a comparison is not practicable the reconstructed text, except for some few very obvious mistakes, must, for the present, be that of the faulty archetypal  $\beta$ . At present this seems to be as near as one can get to the original B-text, though a nearer approximation can be made when further collations of the B- and C-MSS. are available. This applies particularly to the later Passus (B. Pass. XVII-XX), where the agreement of the B- and C-texts is very close. At the end of this paper short extracts of the reconstructed B-text are given.

It is hoped later to print some Passus at least of the reconstructed B-text, when it will be seen that many apparent roughnesses of the B-text are innovations, and it is even possible that some of those passages in the B-text from which the argument in favour of multiple authorship is drawn owe their present form to scribal errors.

It has been shown that the accepted B-text is faulty in some respects and that occasionally all the B-text MSS. agree in an erroneous reading, proving their descent from one archetypal MS., the faulty  $\beta$ .<sup>79</sup> Very little is known of the method of MS. publication in the 14th and 15th centuries; it may be that  $\beta$  came into the hands of a man who subsequently specialized in copies of the B-version, and that a whimsical chance not only gave him a faulty MS. but also preserved just his copies and their descendants.

Whatever the cause may have been, there is one significant fact which cannot be overlooked by students of *Piers Plowman*—the extant evidence suggests that the writer of the C-text worked from a B-text MS. which, in certain respects, was better than the ancestor of the extant B-text MSS. This may have been pure luck, or the writer of the C-text may have had a special knowledge of the value of a certain type of B-text MS. Of course it is quite possible that copies of the B-text, less faulty than the archetypal MS. of those which have survived, were in circulation.

In conclusion I have only to express my thanks to the Provost and Fellows of Oriel College, Oxford, and to the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, for depositing their MSS. at the Bodleian for my use; to the Principal and Council

<sup>79</sup> *G1* is a possible exception.

of Newnham College, Cambridge for allowing me to consult their MS; to the Librarian of Trinity College, Dublin, for permitting me to have a portion of the Dublin C-text MS. photographed; to the officials of the Bodleian and Cambridge University Libraries and of the British Museum for their unfailing courtesy, and, more especially, to Dr. R. W. Chambers and Mr. J. H. G. Grattan for the help and advice they have given me throughout this work.

## PIERS PLOWMAN

Provisional draft of revised B-text.\*

Passus I. 163–207.

(Fol. 6r.)

For in kynde knowynge in herte . þere [comsiþ a  
miȝt], 163  
And þat falleth to þe fader . þat formed vs alle,  
Loked on vs with loue . and lete his sone deye 165  
Mekely for owre mysdedes . to amende vs alle.  
And ȝet wolde he hem no woo . þat wrouȝte hym þat  
peyne,  
But mekelich with mouthe . mercy he bisouȝte  
To haue pite [on] þat poeple . þat peyned hym to deth.

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163. *in*] of *B BM Cot Cr.* *in* (2)] off *G1 B BM Cot.* *þere* [comsiþ a miȝt]  
þere a myȝte bigynneth *L M F C B BM Cot Y O C2 W Cr*; begynnyth  
a myght *G1.* *R* lacks *Pass: I. 138-II. 39.*

164. *vs*] you *Cr2, Cr3.*

165. *Loked*] He looked *Cr.* *and*] *om: B BM Cot.*

166. *Mekely*] Mekel *C.* *amende*] amenden *W.*

167. *And*] *om: G1.* *he*] *om: B BM Cot.* *hem*] theym *G1.* *þat þeyne*] al þat tene  
*B BM Cot.*

168. *with*] bi *O C2.* *he*] *om: W.*

169. [on] so in *M F B BM Cot O C2 Cr G1*; of *L C Y W.* *þat* (1)] the *G1 F.*  
*hym*] hem *BM Cot.*

\*The revised B-text is based on *I*., collated with *M, R, F, C, B, BM, Cot, Y, O, C2, G2, W, Cr, G1*, and also with the revised A-text of Messrs. Chambers and Grattan and with the C-text. Corruptions peculiar to *F* or *Cr*, and orthographical variations are not always noted. Messrs. Chambers and Grattan provided me with proof sheets of the provisional draft of their revised A-text, and permit me to reprint here the necessary extracts from Passus I. The C-text readings are obtainable in the E. E. T. S. edition.

## PIERS PLOWMAN

Provisional draft of revised A-text.†

Passus I. 139–183.

For in kynde knowyng in herte . þer comsiþ a miȝt	139
And þat falliþ to þe fadir . þat fourmide vs alle	140
Lokide on vs wiþ loue . and let his sone deiȝe	
Mekliche for oure misdedis . to amende vs alle:	
And ȝet wolde he hem no woo . þat wrouȝte him þat pyne	
But mekly wiþ mouþe . mercy he besouȝte	
To haue pite on þat peple . þat pynede hym to deþe.	145

†Words and letters placed within round brackets ( ) are to be deleted from the critical text, though found in the MS used as a basis.

Words and letters within square brackets [ ] are not in the MS used as a basis, but are inserted into the critical text from other MSS.

Important variations are given in the footnotes.

Here myȝtow see ensamples . in hym selue one, 170  
 That he was miȝtful *and* meke . and mercy gan graunte  
 To hem þat hongen him an heiȝ . and his herte þirled.  
 For thi I rede ȝow riche . haueth reuthe [on] þe  
 pouere,  
 Thouȝ ȝe be myȝt[y] to mote . beth meke in ȝowre  
 werkes;  
 For þe same mesure þat ȝe mete . amys other  
 elles, 175  
 ȝe shullen ben weyen þer wyth . whan ȝe wende hennes.  
*Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis.*  
 For þouȝ ȝe be trewe of ȝowre tonge . and trewliche  
 wynne,  
 And as chaste as a childe . þat in cherche wepeth,  
 But if ȝe louen lelliche . and lene þe poure,

- 
170. *myȝtow*] maist þou *B BM Cot*; miȝt þou *M*; might you *Cr*; myghtestow *C Y*; myȝtist þou *O C2 G1*. *see*] *se* in *Cr2 Cr3*. *ensamples*] *ensaumpyle C W Cr3 G1*. *hym selue*] *selfe Cr*.  
 171. *miȝtful*] myghty *G1*. *and mercy gan graunte*] *y*; *mercie can graunt Cr*.  
 172. *hem*] *theym G1*. *hongen*] *hengen W B BM Cot*; *hange Cr1*; *hangen Cr2*; *hanged Cr3, G1*. *him an*] *om: B BM Cot*; *theym G1*. *him an heiȝ*] *on height him Cr2 Cr3*.  
 173. [on] *so in F C2 Cr G1*; of *L M C Y O W*; vpon *B BM Cot*. *reuthe*] *mercy F*.  
 174. *Thouȝ*] *Thought C BM*. *myȝt [y]* *so in B BM Cot Cr G1*; *myȝtful L M C Y O C2 W*. *in ȝowre werkes*] *off yourseluen G1*.  
 175. *mesure*] *so in B BM Cot F Cr*; *mesures wrongly in L M C Y O C2 G1 W*. [a] *om: G1*.  
 176. *shullen ben*] *shalbe G1*; *shal be B BM Cot Cr*. *fueritis*] *om: BM*; *fueritis aliis Cot G1*; *L M have alliteration points after fueritis. remecietur*] *remetietur W Cr*; *rementietur Cot*.  
 177. [ouȝ] *thoght G1*. [onge] *tonngis B BM Cot*. *wynne*] *selle F*; *wyn Cr1*; *worch Cr2 Cr3*.  
 178. *as*] *ben as B BM Cot*. *cherche*] *kerke C*. *wepeth*] *lernyth G1*. *in—wepeth*] *chideȝ neȝer ne (chideth nother Cot) fiȝtteȝ B BM Cot*.  
 179. *if*] *om: M F*. *lelliche*] *ȝour neyhebore F*; *loyally G1*. *lene*] *leue Cr1 Cr3*; *leene or gyve F*.

## Provisional draft of revised A-text.

Here miȝt þou sen ensaumplis . in hymself one 146  
þat he was miȝtful *and* mek . *and* mercy gan graunte  
To hem þat hongide him by . *and* his herte þirlide.  
For þi I rede þe riche . haue reuþe on þe pore  
þeiȝ ȝe ben miȝty to mote . beþ mek of *ȝour* werkis: 150  
For þe same mesour ȝe mete . amys oþer ellis  
Ȝe shuln be weiȝe þer wiþ . whanne ȝe wende hennes.  
For [þeiȝ ȝe] be trewe of *ȝoure* tunge *and* treweliche  
wynne  
And ek as chast as a child . þat in chirche wepiþ  
But ȝif ȝe loue lelly . *and* lene þe pore 155



Such goed as god sent . godelich parteth, 180  
 3e ne haue na more meryte . in masse ne in houres  
 þan Malkyn of hire maydenhode . þat no man desireth.  
 For Iames þe gentil . iugged in his bokes  
 That faith with oute fait . is [feblere þan nouȝt]  
 And as ded as a dore [nayl] . but ȝif þe dede folwe. 185  
*Fides sine operibus mortua est, etc.*  
 Chastite with oute charite . worth cheyned in helle;  
 It is as lewed as a laumpe . þat no liȝte is inne.  
 Many chapeleynes arne chaste . ac charite is away;  
 Aren [non] auarousere þan hij . whan þei ben auauunced;

- 
180. *Such*] Of *suche* *B BM Cot F.* *goed*] good *C B BM Cot Y O C2 W Cr G1*; *goodis* *F. god sent*] god ȝow sent (god sendyth you *G1*) *wrongly in all the B-MSS. parteth*] deperten *G1*; *with hem ȝe parte* *F.*
181. *ȝe*] You *Cr. ne*] *om: M F Cr G1.* *more*] *om: C. ne(2)]* nor *W Cr.*
182. *Malkyn*] *Makyn Y.* *maydenhode*] *meidenheyd G1*; *meidenhede* *M W Cr.* *no man*] *alle men F. þat—desireth*] whan (wham *BM*) *noman* hire coueiteþ *B BM*; whan *noman* hire woweth *Cot.*
183. *gentil*] *Ientylman F*; *gentile* *W B BM G1.* *iugged*] *juggeþ B BM Cot.*
184. *fail*] *so in Y Cot F*; þe *faite* *L M C B BM O C2 W Cr*; *dede* *G1.* [*feblere—nouȝt*] *so in B BM Cot*; *riȝte* no þinge *worthi* *L M F C Y O C2 W*; *right noth—ing* *worth Cr*; *no thyng* *worthy G1.*
185. *as*] *om: G1.* *a*] *om: C2 Cr.* *as (2)] om: C.* *dore [nayl]* *so in B BM Cot G1*; *dore* *tre* *wrongly in L M F C Y O C2 W Cr.* *but ȝif*] *wythoute G1.* *þe*] *thy C. dede*] *so in G1*; *dedes* *wrongly in L M F C B BM Cot Y O C2 W Cr.* *folwe*] *sewen F. etc.] om: B BM Cot O C2.*
186. *Chastite*] For thi *chastite* *L F C Y O C2 W Cr*; for *chastyte* *G1 M.* *worth cheyned*] *worth sheued G1*; *worthi* *cheines Cr.*
187. *laumpe*] *lawpe C2.* *as . . . laumpe*] *a lewid þyng* *as a laumpe* *B BM Cot.*
188. *ac*] and *C C2 Cr*; but *G1.* *is away*] *hem faileþ B BM Cot.*
189. [*non*] *so in G1 F*; no men *L M O C2 W Cr*; no man *C Y.* *auarousere*] *herder G1.* *hij*] *they G1 O C2 Cr.* *B BM Cot* *have two lines—*  
 Arn none hardere ne hungryere . þan men of holichirche  
 Aueraus (Aueraus *Cot*) and euyl willid . whan þei ben auauunced.

Provisional draft of revised A-text.

Of such good as god sent . goodlyche partep	156
Ȝe ne haue no more meryt . in [masse] ne in [houres]	
þanne malkyn of hire maidenhed . þat no man desirip.	
For Iames þe ientil . [iuggid] in his bokis	
þat feiþ wiþoute fait . is feblere þan nouȝt	160
And as ded as a dorenail . but ȝif þ <sup>e</sup> dede folewe.	
Chastite wiþoute charite . worþ cheynide [in helle]:	
It is as lewid as a laumpe . þat no liȝt is inne.	
Manye chapellenis arn chast . ac charite is a weye:	
Arn none hardere þan þei . whanne þei ben auauncid:	165

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156. parten.

157. ne *omitted*.

161. as *omitted*.

162. schryned.

164. but.

Vnkynde to her kyn . and to alle cristene, 190  
 Chewen here charite . and chiden after more.  
 Such chastite wiþ outen charite . worth cheyned in helle.  
 Many curatoures kepen hem . clene of here bodies,  
 Thei ben acombred wiþ coueitise . þei konne nouȝt [out  
 crepe]

(Fol. 6v.)

So harde hath auarice . yhasped hem togideres. 195  
 And þat is no treuthe of þe trinite . but treccherye of  
 helle  
 And lernyng to lewde men . þe latter for to dele.  
 [For þis arn wordis . ywryten in þe euangelie],  
*Date et dabitur vobis* . for I dele ȝow alle.

190. *her*] theyr *G1 Cr.* *kyn*] kynde *Y.*  
 191. *Chewen*] they chewen *G1*; and schewen *C2.* *here*] theyr *G1 Cr.*  
 192. *cheyned*] sheued *G1*; worthie chaynes *Cr1 Cr2.* *Cr3 omits this line.* *B BM Cot omit this line and the next.*  
 193. *curatoures*] creaturs *Y.* *hem . . . here*] theym . . . theyre *G1.*  
 194. *Thei*] But þey *F*; And *B BM Cot.* *ben*] are *G1.* *coueitise*] couytous *G1.* *þei konne nouȝt*] and cannot *G1*; þey kunne *F.* [out crepe] so in *F*; crye oute *G1*; crepe out *B BM Cot*; don it fram hem (them *Cr*) wrongly in *L M Y C O C2 W Cr.*  
 195. *hem*] theym *G1 Cr.* *yhasped*] hasped *G1.*  
 196. *no*] in *O C2.* *of helle*] and synne *B BM Cot.*  
 197. *lernyng*] lerned *Y*; lernye *Cr1.* *for*] om: *F G1.* *dele*] to leue synne *F.*  
*B BM Cot read for this line:*  
 And a lyper ensauple lief me . as for þe lewid peple.  
 198. *So* in *B BM Cot* (*B misplaces the alliteration point*);  
 For þi (For *C2*) þis wordes . ben wryten in þe gospel  
 wrongly in *L M F C Y O C2 W Cr G1* (*L has the alliteration point after ben*).  
 199-201 *B BM Cot read:*  
*Date et dabitur vobis* (vobis etc. *BM*)  
 For y dele ȝow alle . and þat is þe lok of loue  
 And vnloseþ (vnlose *Cot*) my grace . þat confortēþ alle  
 careful encumbred with synne.

Provisional draft of revised A-text.

Vnkynde to here kyn . <i>and</i> ek to alle cristene	166
Chewen here charite . <i>and</i> chiden aftir more:	
Such chastite wiþoute charite . worþ cheynid in helle.	
Ȝe curatours þat kepe ȝow . clene of ȝour body	
Ȝe ben acumbrid wiþ coueitise . ȝe [conne] not out	
crepe	170
So [hard] haþ auarice . haspide ȝow to gideris.	
[þat] is no treuþe of trinite . but a treccherie of helle	
And a ler[n]ing to (þe) lewde men . þe lattere to dele.	
For þise arn (þe) wordis . writen in þe Euaungelie	
<i>Date et dabitur vobis</i> . for I dele ȝow alle.	175

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169. bodies.

171. gidere.

172. a *omitted*.

200. *And*] *om*: Cr; and *and G1*. [pat (2)] *so in G1 Cr*; and *L C Y O C2 W*; pat  
over an erasure *M. lateh*] lettyth *G1 C W Cr*.
201. *conforte*] counforte O; confort C; conforten *W Cr*; comfort *G1 C2*.
202. *Loue*] So loue *B BM Cot. nexte*] next C. *selue*] hym seluen *Y G1. nexte*  
... *selue*] lisse of alle payne *B BM Cot*.
203. *graiih*] *om*: Cr3; grette C2. *B BM Cot read for this line*  
And the graffe of grace . and redieste way til heuene.
204. *sey*] may seye *B BM Cot. ere* ... *textis*] *so in G1, see too I. 132; erst bi*  
þe trewe textis *O C2* (trewe marked for correction in O but none given);  
ere by þe textis *L M F C Y W Cr*; best of þes textes *B BM Cot*.
205. *ben*] are *G1. ytryed*] tryed *G1 B BM Cot M W Cr*.
206. *Now*] So Cr. *haue I*] I haue *G1. þe*] you Cr. *þat* ... *bettere*] and no  
treysour better *G1*; tak it if þu lyke *F. For this line and the next B BM*  
*Cot read*:  
Loue it quod þat lady . lette may y lenger (no lenger *BM*)  
To (Tho *BM*) lere þe wat loue is . and leue at me she laughte.
207. *þe—now*] but *G1, which also adds explicit secundus passus de visione.*  
*now* ... *lorde*] oure lord looke þe euere *F.*

Provisional draft of revised A-text.

þat is þe loke of loue . þat letiþ out my grace	175
To counforte þe carful . acumbrid wiþ synne.	
Loue is þe leueste þing . þat oure lord askiþ	
And ek þe graiþ gate . þat goþ in to heuene.	
For þi I seiþe as I siede er . be siþte of þise tixtes	180
Whan alle tresouris arn triþede . treuþe is þe beste.	
Now haue I told þe what treuþe is . þat no tresour is	
	betere
I may no lengere lenge . now loke þe oure lord.	

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179. graiþest.

Passus XVIII. 1-39. Passus XVIII<sup>us</sup> *et tercius de dobet.*

(Fol. 76v.)

Wolleward and wete shoed . went I forth after  
 As a reccheless renke . þat of no wo reccheth,  
 And ȝede forth lyke a lorel . al my lyf tyme  
 Tyl I wex wery of þe worlde . and wylned eft to slepe,  
 And lened me [til] lenten . and longe tyme I slepte, 5  
 [Reste] me þere and rutte faste . tyl *ramis palmarum*;  
 Of gerlis *and of gloria laus* . gretly me dremed,  
 And of crystes passioun and penaunce . þe peple þat of  
 rauȝte,  
 And how *osanna* by orgonye . olde folke songen.  
 One semblable to þe samaritan . *and* some del to  
 Piers þe plowman 10  
 Barfote on an asse bakke . botelees cam [prikye],  
 Wyth oute spores other spere . spakliche he loked  
 As is þe kynde of a knyȝte . þat cometh to be dubbed

Title. *et . . . dobet*] *om*: *M O C2 C*; etc. *et iijus de dobet W*; *et quartus de dobet B*  
*BM Cot wrongly*; *G1 omits the title*; *R has Passus xvjus de visione vt supra*;  
*F has Incipit Passus XIII<sup>us</sup>*.

1. Wolleward] wellowerd *F*.
2. *As*] And as *C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2*. *a*] *om*: *O*. *renke*] freek *B BM Cot*;  
*renke altered to reuke G2*; *reuke Cr. wo*] *om*: *C*. *reccheth*] rouȝte *B BM*  
*Cot W*; *recched G2*.
4. *wex*] were *G2*. *wylned*] wilnes *C*; *willed Cr. eft to*] eft *R Cot*; oft to *B BM*.
5. [til] to a *L M R F C B BM Cot Y O C2 W Cr*, to *G2*, all wrong. *slepte*]  
*slepe B BM Cot*.
- 6-9. All the *B-text MSS.* have these lines in the following order—8 6 7 9; clearly  
*l. 8 is out of place, it must be put before (or possibly after) l. 9*.
6. [Reste] so in *M C Y O C2 W*; Rested *L R F*; rest *G2 Cr*; I reste *B Cot*; I  
restid *BM*. *rutte*] rutt *G2 Cr*.
7. *and*] *om*: *O*. *gretly*] grealye *Cr3*.
8. þe] þer *B Cot*. þat—rauȝte] þat of taughte *C Y C2 G2*; þer of tauȝte *B*  
*BM Cot*; of taught *Cr2 Cr3*; ofte tauȝte *O*.
9. *orgonye*] organ *B BM Cot*; orgene *R*. *folke*] folkes *C B BM Cot*; men *F*;  
men corrected to folk *O*.
10. to(2)] *om*: *G2*. þe(2)] *om*: *C B BM Cot O C2 G2*. *Piers*] petrus *C2*.
11. on an] and on an *Y O C2 C B BM Cot*. *cam*] gan *C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2*.  
[prikye] so in *M Cot O W*; prekie *B BM*; pryke *L C Y C2 G2*; prickynge  
*Cr R*; springe *F*.
12. *spores*] spore *Cr. other*] or *M Cot O Cr*. *spakliche*] meliche *C2*; spracliche  
*R F*; spackly *Cr*; sharpliche *B BM Cot*.

To geten [him] gylte spores . [and] galoches ycouped.  
 panne was faith in a fenestre . and cryde, "*a, fili*  
*dauid!*" 15  
 As doth an Heraude of armes . whan [auntrous] cometh  
 to iustes.  
 Olde iuwes of ierusalem . for ioie þei songen  
*Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini.*  
 panne I frayned at faith . what al þat fare be  
 ment[e],  
 And who sholde iouste in Iherusalem . "Ihesus," he  
 seyde,  
 "And fecche þat þe fende claymeth . Piers fruite þe  
 plowman." 20  
 "Is Piers in þis place?" quod I . and he preynte on me,  
 "Þis ihesus of his gentrice . wole iuste in piers armes,  
 In his helme and in his haberioun . *humana natura*;  
 þat cryst be nouȝt biknowe here . for *consum[m]atus*  
*deus,*

- 
13. a] om: Y. be] om: C. dubbed] doubted G2; dowbbed G2. B BM Cot omit this line.  
 14. geten]geute B BM Cot. [him] hem L. [and] so in C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2 Cr; or L M R W; on F.  
 15. faith] feythe a G2. cryde] crie C. a fili] fili B BM Cot G2; O fili Cr.  
 16. [auntrous] so in R C O C2 Y; aunturos L; aunturous (where ou is added over an erasure) M; aunterers G2; aentrous W Cr; aduenturus B BM Cot. iustes]justice Cr1.  
 17. nomine] nomieue Cr2. domini] domini etc. Y O C2 B BM G2 C.  
 18. panne] That C. be ment[e] so in R O; bymente M C B BM Y W Cr; byment Cot; bement L C2; ment G2; mente F.  
 19. And] om: Cr. sholde]om: R.  
 20. fecche] fech partly over an erasure M; feccheth R; fecche out B BM Cot. Piers fruite] piers fruye Y; petrus frute C2.  
 21. Piers] petris C2. þis] þat B BM Cot. I] om: C. preynte] prente M F; prent R; prent Cr C; twynclid B BM Cot.  
 22. þis] þus B BM Cot. of] in G2. gentrice] gentris M C2; gentrie R B BM Cot Cr; gentries W C G2.  
 23. and in] and M C B BM Cot G2. in his] om: O.  
 24. biknowe] knowen M; knowe B Cot Y; knowne Cr; yknowe C BM C2 G2; yknowen O. consum[m]atus] so in M R F B BM Cot Y O C2 W Cr; consumatus L C G2. deus] est C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2. B BM Cot place l.24 after l.25.



25. *paltok*] *palcot* or *paltot* *C2*. *priker*] *prikiare* *R*; *prikere* *B B BM Cot. ryde*] *aride* *Y*.
27. *quod* *I*] *om*: *G2*. *or*] and *Y*.
28. *he*] *faith* *RF*. *pe*] *but* *pe* *R*. *foule*] *om*: *R F*; *fould* *Cr2 Cr3*. *fals*] also *G2*. *and deth*] *to deye* *R F*; *ad deep* *B*.
29. *adown*] *doun* *C2 G2*; *adom* *B BM Cot*.
30. *or*(1)] and *R F W*. *or* (2)] and *W*.
31. *he*] *om*: *C*. [*liep*] *so in M C Y O C2 W Cr1*; *lyethe* *G2*; *lizep* *B BM Cot*; *likth* *R F*; *likthe* *L*; *liueth* *Cr2 Cr3*.
33. *fecche*] *to fecche* *G2*. *fruile*] *fructe* or *frutte* *C2*. *pe* (2)] *om*: *Y*.
34. *And*] and *to C2*; *to G2*. [*vede*] *so in F B BM Cot*, cf ll. 267, 398; *legge* *L M R C Y O C2 G2 W Cr*. *ii*] *hym* *G2*
35. *forbete*] *forbite* *R*; *for to bete* *C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2 Cr2 Cr3*. *adown*] *doun* *M R G2 Cr*; *a don* *B BM*. *bale*] *bale* and *Y O C2 G2*; *bale of* *B BM Cot*. *ero—tua*] *mors tua* *ero* *R*; *ero tua mors* *Cot*. *tua*] *tua* etc. *B BM Cot Y O C2 G2 C*.
36. *moche*] *om*: *C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2*.
37. *doughtilich*] *douthliche* *C2*; *doughty* *Cr1*; *douty* *Cr2 Cr3*. *her*] *per* *G2*. *boheres*] *bopes* *M Cr1*; *beither* *R*; *bope* *F*; *bothere* *Y*; *brotheres* *C B BM Cot G2 Cr2 Cr3*; *brethers* *C2*. *riste*] *myst* *O*.

þe iuwes and þe iustice . aȝeine ihesu þei were,  
 And al [þe] courte on hym cryde . *crucifige* sharpe.

- 
38. [þe] *om*: *M B Cot Cr.* *iustice*] *Iustices C B BM Cot Y O Cr2 Cr3 F.* [þei]  
*om*: *G2.*
39. [þe] *so in M F C B BM Cot Y O C2 G2 W Cr*; *her L R.* *on*] of *Y*; *vpon*  
*M.* *on—cryde*] *vp and cried Cr1*; of *hem cried Cot.* *hym*] *ihesu R.*

ELSIE BLACKMAN.

*University College, London.*